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THE
PRECIPITATE CHOICE:

OR, THE
HISTORY
OF

LORD OSSORY

AND

MISS RIVERS.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By a LADY.

VOL: I.

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J. Richardson

THE
PRECIPITATE CHOICE;
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Lord OSSORY and Miss RIVERS.

LETTER I.

TO CHALES RIVERS, Esq.

NOW help me to rail, to curse that seducing libertine sex, who have for so many years been the subject of your satire.---Yes, Charles, I have for some time past been a convert to your opinion, my hopeful rib has followed the example of her elder sister, but in iniquity she far out does her,---your wife was comparatively a Diana, after being detected in a faux pas she had the grace to bury herself and her shame in obscurity,---she has ever since been dead to the world,---her prudent retreat in some measure, aton'd for her fault;---your honour received only a slight scratch, compared to that which mine has suffered; the broad shame comes staring in my face, and boys---pride forbids me to finish the horrid sentence---she is gone---we are separated for ever; I shall not take the trouble to sue for a divorce; why should I?

since not even the charms of a Venus, with Pallas's mind, could tempt me again to play the fool and marry. I have thus got rid of one plague, but another still remains: Can I sleep in peace,--- Can I enjoy that ease, of which your indolent friend, as you often call me, is so fond, while it is still in the power of a female to plunge me deeper in dishonour---marry your daughter says somebody, I forget who, least she marry herself,---but an imprudent marriage in these our degenerate days, is not the worst a parent has to fear.

The girl already, young as she is, discovers so much of her mother's disposition, that I have the most dreadful forbodings of her future fate---who would have the courage to marry, did they but seriously weigh the consequence.---This was not my case,---caught by a fine face, and sprightly wit, without giving myself time to reflect, I rush'd into the fatal snare.-----But all this you knew before, let me rather ask your opinion in regard to Bell.---What am I to do with her? she is now out of her teens, and has for some years been under the tuition of a French governess, one of her mother's hopeful confidants, as I have discovered upon our late rupture.---a sweet tutorefs for a young girl to be sure!--too late I repent my indolent inattention to her education. I saw she had a graceful ease in her manner, that she danced with elegance---sung agreeably and spoke French with fluency. Satisfied that she was mistress of these superficial accomplishments, I gave myself no farther trouble: Her mind,---ah! I fear it is irreparably perverted; had it been left in a state of nature, I might have had some hopes, but her native levity has gained new force, by the precepts of an intriguing governess; and the example of a mother lost to virtue.

Both

Both these perverters, these poisoners of her youthful heart, are dismissed with the infamy they deserve; but 'tis too late—the mischief is done:—What my next step must be, heaven knows: The girl's continuing to live with me, is out of the question; I have neither talents nor inclination to commence her preceptor; I have no maiden sisters to undertake the important charge;—would to heaven I could find some place of safety to send her to, 'till I can fix on a fit husband for her.

Her beauty; (for Bell has all her mother's charms, and I fear all her imperfections into the bargain) her beauty I say, and large fortune, will easily procure her a suitable match in this prudent age:—Do Charles, help me by your sage advice out of this dilemma; do you know any old dowager to whom I could commit her?—it must be in the country remember; for our old harri-dans in town, are only more practised in the ways of vice than their grand-daughters; but an ancient castle in the country, walled round, with a starched virgin, neglected from her youth upwards, by the other sex; whom nature has fenced round on every side, and effectually secured from all attempts; who never heard the seducing whispers of flattery; who never excited a tender sigh, or amorous gaze;—could we find an unfortunate damsel like this? compelled to chastity, from dire necessity; this was a fit, a watchful dragon to guard the tempting fruit.

Adieu!—I have a thousand engagements on my hands, and a thousand plagues in my head; but no situation in life, shall ever diminish the regard with which I am,

dear Charles,
your's, &c.

HENRY RICHMOND,

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L F T.

L E T T E R II.

Mr. RIVERS to Sir HENRY RICHMOND.

T'HERE is not a married man in England, but who sooner, or later, will be compelled to subscribe to my creed.—I need not tell you what that creed is, since you have a thousand times, while an infidel, heard me repeat it.—Poor Harry;—well, “your condition (our condition I should say) is not to be scorned,” since the first men in the nation, “are now-a-days horned.”

A pretty task you would have me engage in,—to go in quest of virginity,—of an old maid;—an old unmarried woman is, I trow, easily found; but for a maid,—you must first provide me with a few of those dogs mentioned in the spectator,—my scent is not good enough to discover them.

I question if in all London such a phoenix is to be found, out of leading-strings; and you want, not a youthful, but an antient Duena.—The scheme you propose is chimerical, the best advice I can give you, is, that you send Bell to keep her cousin company.—My girl has been in a convent ever since her mother's fine pranks were discovered;—and there she shall remain, till I have a husband ready at the foot of the altar to receive her hand, and to take the wayward charge out of mine:

I do not recommend a nunnery as a school of morality; on the contrary, I think with Rousseau, that it is a nursery of coquettes; but since Mungo's receipt is found ineffectual (for we have lost the art of which the English once boasted, padlocking the minds of our females, by a generous confidence

confidence and reasonable freedom;) since this will no longer restrain them, or rather since they no longer think it worth their while to deceive us, by an outward appearance of virtue, but sin with a high hand, and in the face of day;—since this, I say, is the case, the Spanish padlock must be substituted in lieu of the English.

I have placed bolts and bars, as guards upon my daughter; marriage alone shall release her from her prison—she then becomes the property of her husband—if after that she commences the modern fine lady—his honour receives the principal wound—the disgrace glances only obliquely on me—her name, her condition is changed; from me he receives her pure—’tis his business to keep her so—if not, he must take the consequence. Ridiculous:—Unjust however, is that prejudice, which makes us confound the innocent with the guilty—but ’tis no longer the case—***** is now an honourable name—no longer the prerogative of city husbands, but the high court fashion—a title of distinction. A woman of quality thinks it now a-days absolutely necessary to be divorced, in order to establish the reputation of her beauty (that is, the only reputation of which she is ambitious!) The age of chivalry is past—fighting is no longer in vogue—gallants are substituted in the room of knight-errants—no longer do we defend and contend for our mistress’s charms, by the force of arms, but we give a still more daring proof of their power—we marry the woman who has given us the strongest instance of weakness:—We take as our wives, the wantons whom our neighbours cast off—who have been publicly branded with infamy.—What folly?—What astonishing infatuation!—Our ancestors would have blushed at the
bare

bare mention of such depravity of morals; but we, their more polished sons, glory in our shame.

Pardon me, Harry; you know there is no stopping either my pen or tongue, when I stumble on this subject; but for once I will check myself—'tis hackneyed—all the world rail—but nobody looks at home, and begins the reformation so much wish'd for.

Let us return to the girls:—If you chuse to carry yours abroad, I'll accompany you.—I do not think, if she is the lively hussy you describe, she ought to be trusted with any other escort but yourself.—Yet why should I say, if she is this, or that; vice is not confined to any particular temper or age. Who could have a more seducing appearance, a more promising disposition than my torment.—Mild as the gentle breeze of May—timid—blushingly modest—full of tender sensibility—her sentiments delicate and refined.—Often have I, in the days of foolish love and rapture, read to her Milton's fine description of Eve, and swore she sat for the amiable picture—

not obvious, not obtrusive—

but retired.——

Such seemed to be her nature. Alas! too soon she threw off the mask. Do you know, Harry? No, you do not: Let me then spare myself the shame of confessing my weakness. Harriot is the exact image of her mother: As a daughter she acts with the greatest propriety. No one can be more dutiful, more submissive, more affectionate; never has she uttered a single complaint at her confinement,—but she is of a grave turn—vastly sentimental, forsooth;—in short, the very character I have drawn above. But as I must from fatal experience, exclaim with the poet, “*Frailty, thy name is Woman.*”

So.

The PRECIPITATE CHOICE.

9

So do I not place any manner of confidence in these favourable appearances; the foundation of my security is good substantial iron bars. Let me know, whether or no you chuse to follow my example. Harriot is not much older than your daughter: Her gravity and prudence, however, will give her a sort of authority over your giddy girl, and may be a means of moderating her too great vivacity. If you determine to place her at the convent of B——, I will, as I before said, accompany you in your expedition, and there we will leave them safe under lock and key, till we can find fit mates.

Adieu. Let me have your answer by the return of the post; because, if I do not go with you to France, I propose a visit of a few weeks to our old fellow collegian, Tom Bertie.

I am,

dear Sir Harry,
your's sincerely

CHARLES RIVERS.

L E T T E R III.

Miss RIVERS to Miss ELIZA DUDLEY.

OF how much happiness am I deprived by the loss of my sweet friend and companion. Dreary now appears this melancholy inclosure--- so the world calls it ; but never till my Eliza's departure did it wear a gloomy aspect to her Harriot ; happy in your society, guarded by pious precepts from the love of a tumultuous world, of which I know nothing, but from the description of those whose interest it now is to dwell only on the dark side of the picture.

I was perfectly content with my tranquil retreat : With what chearful alacrity did you and I enter into our innocent amusements ; not a moment of our time hung heavy on our hands ;--- but, since seperated from you, I feel an aching void in my heart ; our little recreations have, to me, lost their charms ; I still see around me the same serene, contented countenances, but I see none to whom I can, with unlimited freedom unbosom myself : I like and esteem them ; but tis a cool sentiment, compar'd to what I experienced for you. My judgement approves, but my affections are unengaged : Let me not however damp your joy, at being again received into the arms of a tender mother ; by my complaints, rather let me congratulate you on your felicity : A mother ! O my friend ! the very mention of that endearing name, fills my eyes with tears. Long, long, have I been deprived of mine : But, young as I was, when I enjoyed that inestimable blessing, strongly is it impressed on my memory ; I love to recollect
her

her tenderness on these occasions. I seem still to feel her kisses on my cheek, and fancy myself pressed to her maternal bosom. She is no more ! Yet let me not repine, I have still a parent left ; but it seems natural to our sex to be more fondly attached to the mother, than the father. I reverence the latter, but my affection is mixed with awe ; a hasty word from him agitates my whole frame ; while his smiles excite only a sort of doubtful joy : A joy, alloyed by the fear of inadvertently doing, or saying something that may dispel the sunshine of his countenance, and substitute a cloud in its place. Whereas, had I a mother, I feel that my heart would expand itself in her presence ; I would presume to make her the confidant of all my little secrets : Her feminine softness would encourage me ; on the contrary, my father's manly dignity, adds to my natural timidity, perhaps I should be more at ease in his presence, were I oftner admitted to it ; but tho' he frequently takes a trip to Paris, I enjoy at the grate but little of his company : My first emotions at the sight of him, are always of the most agreeable nature ; but he no sooner beholds me, than his native vivacity is exchanged for a melancholy pensive air, for some moments he continues lost in thought, his visits are short, and he seems to leave me without regret.

Perhaps, my dear, I have before now troubled you with the above remarks. Pardon me,--- what led me to the subject, was a note, which I received from him this morning, informing me that he, my uncle (Sir Harry Richmond) and my cousin Isabella, will be here to-morrow ; the latter is, I fancy, coming to add to the number of our boarders : I never saw her, nor have I the least knowledge of her character ; but as the
daughter

daughter of my mother's sister, I am prepared to love her, and expect her arrival with that female impatience and curiosity, so natural to us. Lady Richmond I have seen, she favoured me last winter with a visit, accompanied by my uncle; she is I think, without exception, the finest woman I ever saw, and as lively as she is handsome:—Sir Harry is no less distinguished for the charms of his person, so that I expect to behold in my little cousin, a perfect Venus; you know my dear, how fond I am of beauty—in others I mean. You will, perhaps, archly smiling, hint, that you could not suspect, I could mean in myself, since you know of none I have to be fond of; this some would say, therefore to save your friend from the imputation of vanity, I saved them the trouble: Do not call this affected humility; I will say no more on the subject

Adieu! my dearest Eliza; remember, though absent, your affectionate

HARRIOT RIVERS.

LETTER IV.

The same to the same.

THEY are come my dear:—About eleven o'clock this morning I was summoned into the parlour, the outward parlour I mean, where we receive company, the lady abbess, and some of the sisterhood, were ready at the other side of the grate, to receive their new charge; my father entered, leading Isabella, followed by Sir Harry; I was struck with the uncommon beauty of her person; she is very tall of her age, her air is graceful and animated; her travelling dress was inimitably becoming; she changed colour at the sight of the nuns, and as it appeared to her, their gloomy inclosure—ah! those iron bars!—cried she, with a faint smile, pointing to the grate, the very sight of them makes a free-born English spirit revolt. I doubt not my dear cousin, said I, embracing her, but time will effectually reconcile you to our serene and tranquil joys. Serene and tranquil, repeated she, a pretty description, and admirably suited to the gravity of the no less pretty speaker: In saying this, she obligingly returned my caresses.—All the English boarders dressed to the best advantage, now by order of the abbess, made their appearance; this had before been requested by my uncle, who knew some of their parents: Here, said he, turning with a smile to my father, one might, I fancy, find that phoenix you despaired to meet with. 'Tis possible, returned the other in the same tone,—thanks to the strength of their impregnable garrison; but how long will they remain so when they get into the world? Sir Harry

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shook

shook his head,--pity they should ever ~~come there~~, said he, to lose that engaging timidity, that seducing air of innocence, which is so charming! did women know their own interest would they wish effectually to enslave us; they would relinquish the *bon ton* for the antient simplicity of manners, and again become retired, which renders them the more to be desired. While her father spoke, Isabella remained buried in thought; the abbess several times addressed to her some polite compliments, to which she answered only by a slight inclination of her head; at last starting from her reverie, she whispered me,---tell me for heaven sake, Harriott, how do you make shift to kill your time amidst those set of inanimates?---ah! Lord,---they had better not admit me into their dreary prison, for I shall take a most unmerciful delight in plaguing them, poor dear souls. What a collection of winter-faced virgins are the nuns? it seems to me, that their vows were quite needless.

Some of them, (the weather being extremely warm) had raised their veils, which gave her an opportunity to make this remark. After chatting about half an hour longer, Sir Harry said, that he wanted to have a little private conversation with the lady abbess, recommending his daughter to my friendship, and promised to call again next morning.

On this my fair cousin and I paid our respects, she gave me her hand---I tremble, whispered she---the entrance into our prison is easy, but ah! how shall we get out again?---Her father over heard her, and in a half whisper, kissing her cheek, said, I will 'ere long, send you a knight-errant, who shall set you at liberty; only to make me more effectually

fectually resign it---returned she archly, however send him---the sooner the better ; “ for it is liberty, dear liberty alone, that gives fresh beauty to “ the sun :” In warbling this air, she entered with me the pious dwelling.

What an ease, what a vivacity is there in the manner of this charming girl ! how little is she restrained by the presence of her father, to what I am by mine ! but this is easily accounted for, not only by the difference of our tempers, but by the difference of theirs : Sir Harry is gallant, polite, and gay ;---my father is well bred, but it is mixed with a little haughtiness ; he is sensible, animated, and is, I fancy, naturally as lively as the other ; but he has met with some vexations in life,---what I know not ;---I only judge so by his manner, wherein one may discover a sort of affected misanthrope ;---affected I say,---for his native good humour frequently breaks out in spite of himself, but he laughs as if he scorned himself for laughing.---You my dear have heard him expatiate on the conduct of our sex ;---on this subject he is unmercifully satirical ; the unfavourable opinion he entertains of us, excites in me a laudable ambition, if possible, by my conduct, to make him do us more justice.

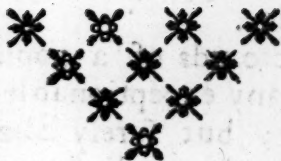
Amidst the crowds of a populous city, there are no doubt, many exceptionable characters, both male and female ; but surely Eliza, our nature is not so depraved as some gloomy moralists pretend. Virtue at least is the very characteristic of our sex ; those that forfeit that, forfeit the name of woman.

Adieu. Let you and I my dear, ever study to deserve that amiable name, by modesty, delicacy, and gentle timidity ; which are all so many parts of our nature : For my share, I glory in being what I am ; nor would all the prerogatives of

which the lordly sex make their boast, tempt me to exchange the soft, the feminine woman, for the bold, the less feeling man. However, were I even to undergo this unfavourable metamorphose my attachment to you would remain; as a female you excite my warmest friendship;---and were I a male, that friendship would be exchanged for love: This change would be so much more flattering to your vanity, that I fear I shall sink in value ~~as~~ what I am, when you consider what I might have been. But I forget,---I talk to you as if still in the convent, where lovers are so scarce; on the contrary, you are in the beaux monde, where every heart endued with sensibility, pays you that tender homage so justly your due.

Farewell, my sweet girl; believe me yours,

H. R I V E R S:



LETTER V.

Miss RICHMOND to Lady BAB WILMOT.

MY father talked of sending me to a convent. You laughed at my fears :---Impossible.--- Your papa, my dear, too much admires a woman of spirit, to send his daughter abroad on any such gloomy errand ---No, child, he will rather encourage, than damp your charming vivacity; you have already all the modish airs and graces, which cost some of us (even women of fashion) so much trouble to acquire. Do you recollect who said all this to comfort her friend? Ah! lady Bab;--- how much did flattering hope deceive us? Look at the place from whence I date this woe-begone epistle, the convent of R-----. You doubt your senses. Borrow your Aunt's specks, child;--- look again;---alas! 'tis even so;---but do not be too much affected: not long will Bell Richmond be confined. By what pretty method do you think I am to be released?---By marriage!---Delightful state of freedom, as our modern wives manage the affair.

The poet makes Calista talk of the husband's imperious reign, "proud with opinion of superior wisdom,"---but our modern dames have taught them better manners. The tables are turned. 'Tis our reign now, not theirs, which then commences.---An unmarried woman is a mere cypher;---but when once the connubial knot is tied, then pleasures golden reign begins:---then for gallants, intrigues, the dear Coterie, and to crown all, a divorce.---What charming methods have the ladies of this polished age discovered, to ren-

der marriage easy. Oh time! hasten that I may become a wife; no matter to whom: I mean as to sense and figure; and indeed, for rank and fortune, we may trust our prudent parents, while we amuse ourselves with forming plans of future gaiety and expence. You know, Bab, I am absolutely wild to enter the joyous state, I flatter myself I have talents to make some figure in it, and thanks to those who superintended my education; I shall have none of those qualms of conscience to struggle with, which those often have who have been cooped up in a nursery till their hanging sleeves were taken off, and, from one extreme, are suddenly thrown into another. Young as I am, I know the world; early was I introduced into scenes of gaiety; often have I stood at the elbow of my mamma, while she has lost a cool hundred at Brag!—By the bye, Lady Bab, brag is one of the most delightful games in nature—something in it so spirited—so fit for a woman of quality; I dare say I should soon become mistress of it. Ah! would I were now at the dear Coterie—learning the enchanting lesson; instead of which, behold me, in a melancholy cell, with a death's head and a weeping Magdalene placed on my toilet, in the room of patch-box and cosmetics. The poor unfortunate ***** of a penitent was depicted with a countenance so horribly rueful, that there was no standing it, if she had not, by her sister saints, been so effectually plaistered up against the wall, I should have taken the liberty to remove her; but since this (without tearing to atoms the sacred relic) could not be done, I have only with my pencil made a little reform in her face, and now she appears with dishevelled hair beating her breast, while her mouth is upon the
broad

broad grin : I never thought my drawing would have been of so much service to me.

I was so diverted at the odd appearance of the picture, when I had thus touched it up, that I determined to exercise my skill on some more of the *memento mori's* ; accordingly, while the honest virgins were in the chapel, yawning over their beads, I stole to their cells, and set their whole collection of saints a laughing ; scarce a picture in the house, but what, with a few of my touches, I put into good humour, tho' before they were repenting in sack cloth and ashes. This is the least humorous piece of mischief I have amused myself with since I came here, and, to say truth, hardly worth relating ; but the Magdalene being facing me as I write, brought it to my remembrance, and whatever whim seizes me, whether in thought, word, or deed. You know I never check myself, so that if I am inclined to talk, or write nonsense, out it comes ; it is a talent in which I excel ; I know not how it may be relished by my own sex, but often have I by the most trifling prattle imaginable, drawn off the attention of a circle of beaux, from plain sensible women, who were left to entertain each other, while they hung enraptured on the pretty follies that flowed from my ruby lips. Oh ! Bab, when will those happy days of dear flirtation return ?—Now I talk of wise women, I must tell you that I have met with a female cousin of mine, one of the demurest little toads you ever beheld ; so sentimental,—delicate,—so timid,—so feminine,—so much the antideluvian—Ah ! Lord, there is no bearing her : And yet it must be owned, the girl has some agreeable talents ; if she did but know how to make use of them ; she has seen nothing of life ; what share of polish she has, is entirely the gift of nature ;

nature ; there is something of a native grace about her, which one would not expect from a poor thing, shut up from infancy, in such a dreary mansion. Her person too, is, what some people would call handsome ; but she is inanimate, at least, she appears so to me, when I compare her to those charming affected lively coquettes, amongst whom I have been accustomed to flourish ; What I here mean by inanimate, is the want of that modish air of freedom, so conspicuous in the town-bred belles ; the loud laugh, the confident stare, which sets all rustic bashfulness at defiance. This kind of animation, is easily acquired ; a couple of winters spent amongst people of fashion, will do the business ; it has nothing to do with expression of countenance, or I should have no reason to tax my cousin with the want of it, for her features undisciplined by art, betray every sentiment of her heart, in her eyes which are large, black, and languishing, one may see the sparkle of joy ; the tear of pity, and the gentle beams of friendly sensibility by turns : In short, they are such a pair of tell-tale eyes, that I know not what she will do with them, when she comes to figure in the Beau-monde ; her hair is dark, her complexion delicate, rather inclined to pale ; she has good teeth, and a pretty mouth ; yet with all this is far from being a striking beauty ; her's is of that kind, which will not please the generality of men, but those she does affect will be deeply so. See here a proof how void I am of envy, but my vanity is too strong to admit that humble vice.

I do not think Harriot is at all to be feared as a rival, she is in every thing so very opposite to your humble servant, that we shall never interfere with each others conquests.—Conquests ! Oh !

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the reviving sound !—What is life without them ! What lifeless clods should we be, were we not actuated, and animated by the transporting hope of admiration ; I am, for my part, astonished, how your plain souls make shift to support their insipid existence ? To them, the brilliant ball, the play-house, the opera, the park, and all the dear enjoyments of public amusements, must lose their charms ; a new fashion in them, will not excite the flush of delighted surprise :—The looking-glass to them, must be a disgusting object. But I forget, that we all view ourselves through the medium of self-love ; and that, however we may accuse dame-fortune of injustice, we all think nature has been sufficiently liberal in her gifts.

Fortunately for you, Lady Bab,—the dinner-bell put a stop to my moralizing epistle ;—it is a strange mixture of—of—no matter what ; it has served to kill a tedious hour of my stupid existence ; and by employing your eyes, has saved half a hundred beaux, from falling a sacrifice to their fatal glances. Adieu. Ever your's,
ISABELLA RICHMOND.

. L E T T E R VI.

Mr. RIVERS to Sir HENRY RICHMOND.

YOU curse your wife for obliging you, by her shameless conduct ; to quit a place, so much to your taste, as this gay city ; I on the contrary, hate it so heartily, that I could curse you, as I do with less scruple, the Count D---, for not suffering me more expeditiously to settle your business, that I may quit it : There is no prevailing on these laughing, fluttering, trifling, giddy-brained mortals, to act like rational beings : I cannot get the Count to dispatch the affair, though it is so much his interest to bring it to a conclusion : How ridiculous ! And yet, these are the people with whose manners you are so much enamoured ; to me they are the most insignificant coxcombs in the creation, nothing can reconcile me to their fantastic follies ; you will, I know tell me, that if they can sing and dance through life, and set every care at defiance, they are a thousand times happier than the snarling philosopher, whose wisdom only serves to shew him the defects of his fellow creature, and how inadequate the joys of this world, are to communicate pleasure, to one who has refined his taste, even to wretchedness. Which of these two, you will ask, is the man timely wise ? That wisdom which serves to render us miserable, deserves the name of folly ; and so *vice versa*, that folly which serves to promote our felicity, deserves the name of wisdom. This is your favourite doctrine, but a thousand such like arguments, would not make me a convert to
your

your opinion ; you may as well prefer madness to reason, or an agreeable dream to less pleasing realities : According to your system, the man who is constantly intoxicated, is both wiser and happier than him that is sober ; but are these sons of laughter really the happy beings you and they pretend ? Impossible ! I should think, void as they are of sensibility, fashion governs them in every thing, nature has given them no peculiar bias ;---they make love,---take snuff,---fight,---dress,---run to public places,---and profess friendship with the same indifference.---I have no patience, I am sick of seeing perpetually, in all I meet, the same insipid gaiety of countenance ; the laugh without a joke,---and of hearing a jingle of words without meaning. Why, since you are so fond of them, did you leave them ? Why is your honour so much easier wounded, than that of the people whose manners you so much admire ? You was in no danger of being either despised or ridiculed for your wife's gallantries ; they would rather congratulate you on being united to one, who is so much mistress of *la bonton* ; sure never any thing equalled the assurance of that woman ! Far from being checked by my presence she seems to watch for opportunities to throw herself in my way : Not often do I go to public places, but when I do I am sure to meet her. The other night at the opera, she made her appearance, blazing with jewels ; I happened unfortunately to place myself in the next box,---she had the impudence to curtesy to me ; I was compelled to return the compliment : With this I could have put up, but fate had determined further to torment me. In coming out it was some time before my carriage could draw up, while I stood waiting for it, behold her again close at my elbow,---“ Your servant Mr Rivers.”
cried

cried she, "long have I wished to have a little conversation with you ;"---"with me madam !" and I darted at her a look of ineffable contempt, "unparalleled assurance ! why you far outstrip your elder sister, she was a vestal when compared to you,"—or to almost any other of her sex," interrupted she, "treat me as you please, but for heaven's sake,—for your own sake—be more just to your injured wife ;—upon my life Rivers she is innocent."---I hurried into my chariot without deigning to answer. She called to me, "stay one moment,---I have something of consequence !" I heard no more, I was glad to make my escape.

The subject in which she strove to engage me, is that, which of all others, is most trying to my naturally impetuous temper: There is a foolish weakness hangs about my heart, which neither my reason or pride can conquer ; I should have spent a horrid night ; past scenes had taken strong possession of me, when my servant fortunately roused me from my disagreeable reverie, by delivering a letter, the contents of which diverted my thoughts to another channel ; it was from my late ward, Lord Ossory ; he tells me, that he has, since his return from abroad, been constantly engaged in settling his household, and affairs relating to his estate ; that he is much pleased with his seat at -----, and intends principally to reside there, for which purpose he has formed an extensive plan of improvements in the house and its environs, which are going on with the utmost expedition, under the inspection of Monsieur La Fare, who has a most elegant taste in these affairs. If I remember right, you was present when my Lord related to me that gentleman's unfortunate history ; happy may he esteem himself in having
met

met with so noble minded, so generous a patron : Infinite are the obligations he owes to his young protector ; indeed I do not believe all England can produce a more amiable nobleman than Offory. I never knew his equal for good sense, good nature, sensibility and integrity : Happy will that woman be, on whom he shall think fit to bestow his heart ; but where can he find one worthy of that distinction ? I have often cautioned him against a too precipitate choice ; but what avails our caution, when those against whom we would be upon our guard, are such adepts in hypocrisy and deceit, that they may bid defiance to the deepest penetration ? I lately wrote to him on this subject, a report prevailing that he was on the point of taking this important, and, in general, as it proves, fatal step. I shall transcribe that part of his letter which is an answer to mine : But first let me own to you, that I cannot help forming a wish, since he is determined to play the fool and marry, that my girl might have the good fortune to please him ; she is, I think, without partiality, as unexceptionable, in every respect, as most of her sex ; nay, I know none who comes so near the description of her on whom he seems inclined to confer that honour ; read what follows, and I dare say you will be of my opinion ; however, reason, as you and I have experienced, has very little to do in these affairs, while at a distance from objects of temptation ; he may form the most prudent plans for his future conduct ; but will a youthful heart like his, alive to every tender feeling, wait for a reason to regulate its choice ? Hear at present with what calm philosophy he talks on the subject.

L E T T E R VII.

Part of Lord OSSORY's letter to Mr.
RIVERS.

YES, my good friend, I am indeed, in spite of all the discouragements yon muster up, determined to take a wife, as soon as ever I can bring my hitherto insensible heart to second my judgment, for both these must join to decide my choice;—the latter, after the most mature consideration, has convinced me, that marriage is a state infinitely preferable to celibacy; and the former tells me it has wants which neither friendship, wealth, nor grandeur, can satisfy.

I am here placed in a little paradise so beautiful appear to me the scenes that surround me (but I must not again launch out in praise of my retreat; I fear I have already tired your patience in the first part of this epistle, with my description of it :) What I was going to remark, is, that even the joys of a more enchanting Eden was deemed imperfect, till man was blessed with a mate,—It is true, fatal consequences sprung from that last most endearing gift, Woman,—but be the consequence what it will, I am determined to run all risks rather than live without experiencing those pleasing ties, which only the matrimonial union can form.—I am returned from my travels, as much the Englishman as when I set off; and after viewing all the celebrated beauties of foreign courts, without prejudice. I must give my own fair country women the preference, for personal charms, and would they but give nature fair play, their minds would be equally amiable—the only fault

fault that foreigners formerly found in them was, a too great reserve, a coolness, and formality of manners, which damp the gaiety of society.--- From one extreme they have now fairly adopted the opposite. Ambitious to acquire what the French call *la bon ton*, instead of agreeable originals, they are become awkward copyists, and their present forced insipid pert vivacity, is ten times worse than their native taciturnity; our climate is not favourable to sprightliness, our women have more sentiment than spirit, more sense than wit--- how much are the former to be preferred to the latter, and how much more insinuatingly engaging is the modest timid, feminine maid, than the trifling, volatile, affected fine lady, who shall stare you out of countenance to shew her good breeding---who talks and laughs aloud at public places, that she may be thought easy and *degagé*---and who prattles incessantly, by way of passing for a wit. With what difficulty does she support a character so contrary to her nature, and how contemptible does it render her in the eyes of men of taste and understanding; nor is she less ridiculed by the gay Parisian dames who laugh at their awkward imitators,--- however, if our fair ones fail in acquiring the graceful ease of their neighbours, and instead of becoming lively sentimental coquettes, become only childish, affected, and insipid praters, though they have not talents for their agreeable follies, yet alas! they are but too apt scholars in lessons of vice, but in spite of an almost general depravity of manners, my temper is too sanguine to give up the hopes of meeting with one of the amiable exceptions,---peradventure there are but ten virtuous women.---For these ten's sake, I will spare the rest :---and oh! if heaven in mercy has destined one of these ten to fall

to my lot, to be the dear sweetner of my future days, then will my happiness be complete.

If you, my good friend, should be so fortunate as to stumble on one of these your Emilius's, at present undiscovered Sophia, inform me where the angel is to be found, that I may fly to her on the wings of love, and to you with gratitude, for adding to the favours already conferred on

dear Sir,
your most obedient Servant,
OSSORY.



Mr. RIVERS in continuation.

NOW Sir Harry, what say you to my scheme, ---to me it appears extremely feasible,---I shall not, however too precipitately proceed in the affair---to take Harriott out of her convent on the strength of it, might be attended with disagreeable consequences; much as I wish honourably to dispose of her, yet will not my pride suffer me to render her cheap in his eyes---no, if the character I shall give him of her, together with a few hints, that his alliance will be acceptable, does not bring him to France, the girl's return to England shall not be hurried on his account.

Adieu, I am going to answer his letter; your daughter is well, I saw her yesterday; I believe the sober sisterhood would not be sorry to be rid of their charge; the little gipsy has already played them a thousand mischievous pranks, yet there is so much humour mixed with her rogueries, that they hardly know whether to laugh or chide, it is a most seducing hussy, but in spite of all her wit and beauty, I foresee the man will not be much to be envied, who calls her his wife.

I am,

dear Sir Harry,

your's sincerely,

CHARLES RIVERS.

LETTER VIII.

MISS RIVERS to MISS ELIZA DUDLEY.

YOU fear that my charming cousin, as you justly call her, will supplant in my affections, my absent friend.---Are you really Eliza visited with such humble groundless apprehensions?---Ought I to pardon a suspicion, so injurious to us both?---Yes, since in spite of self-love, you could be so unjust to yourself, I may certainly forgive your being so to me.---No, my dear, I do not think it possible, a friendship like yours and mine, can ever know decrease.---They say, people can love but once.---And I am tempted to think, that one can also but once in one's life, contract a sincere, and genuine friendship.---This singular way of thinking seems to argue in me, a narrow and contracted heart; I hope it has not that fault, yet I own, I cannot like most young girls, form a variety of intimacies, and solicit the friendship of almost every new and agreeable face I meet with, I have one friend whom I love with an ardor, a zeal which is not to be expressed: I have also a few intimates, whose company gives me pleasure; but there are a hundred others, amongst the number of my acquaintance, who at the very first glance, brought me, as my sprightly cousin calls it, to the freezing point, and with regard to them, it is in my heart winter all the year: I hardly or ever get the better of the first impression, so that I am terribly afraid I shall be one of those indiscreet damsels who are doomed to love at first sight,--heaven shield us all from Cupid's dart.

At

At present make me thankful I am pretty well out of his reach. The mischievous boy was hardly known, even by fame in this peaceful mansion, 'till the arrival of Bell Richmond: She has almost done as much mischief by her description of *la Belle passion* here, as the little deity did amongst the nymphs of the unfortunate Dido. Without joking, this cousin of mine is constantly engaged in some roguish prank or other; she has brought with her a whole collection of novels, and those of the most passionate stile; one of these she contrived to place open upon the table of each of the nuns in their cells, in the room of their prayer-book, so that when they went to their devotions, instead of a prayer,-----behold a billet-doux.----- It would fill a quire of paper to tell you half the tricks she has played the good creatures, since she was committed to their charge; a charge of which they are already heartily weary of.

And is it a volatile being like this, Eliza, who you regard as a rival in my friendship?---No, my dear, our hearts do not sympathize;---our characters are as opposite as light and darkness: Nevertheless, I have all that regard for her, to which, as a relation she is entitled. Her conversation too, is so sprightly and entertaining, that it is impossible not to be pleased with it,---on people of a melancholy cast it might have a disagreeable effect. The violent flow of her spirits, would only serve more effectually to depress theirs; but, I thank Heaven, though not intitled to the appellation of a mad creature, have a native cheerfulness, which enables me both to promote, and relish innocent mirth, but then, as the sensible old song advises, "It is good to be merry and wise."

I fear Bell does not always confine herself within those narrow limits; her's borders on indiscretion:

tion : Mademoiselle D'Aubigny, has, you know, a very handsome brother, (L'Abbe, as we used to call him, because his friends intended him for holy orders) who frequently visits her at the grate ; my cousin saw him one day by accident, since that time this girl and her have been inseparable : Ninnon is much of her own turn. The young man now dedicates almost every morning to his sister--- Bell is always of their party ;---as her friend has never hinted that my company would be acceptable, so, though I would wish to know what passes on these occasions, my pride will not suffer me to intrude. I have some disagreeable forebodings of the consequence of their interviews ; but pardon me my dear, I ought not to trouble you with such trifles ; yet, what but trifles can occur in my present situation ; where all is peaceful, regular, and as some would add, uniformly insipid. What a contrast is my life now to yours ? I do not wonder that you long for the time of your removal into the country:---You know what our favourite Rousseau says, " Minds of delicate sensibility, &c." purling streams and shady bowers, would much better suit the taste of my Eliza.

Adieu, and be assured that no time nor chance shall ever shake my firm my fixed regard for thee.

HARRIOT RIVERS.

L E T T E R IX.

CHARLES RIVERS, Esq; to Sir HENRY RICHMOND.

YOUR presence here is absolutely necessary ; ---come and take the charge of your ungovernable daughter ;---a fine adventure she has been engaged in :---You left, you know, strict orders with the abbess, that she was not to permit Bell, on any pretence whatever, to go out of the convent, except either you or I went personally to fetch her ;--but what is a sufficient security against the fruitful inventions of a woman's wit ? She contracted an intimacy with one of the pensioners, a lively French girl, of her own age and disposition ; this girl has a handsome brother, young, indiscreet, and impetuous, who frequently visited her at the grate ;---Bell always on these occasions accompanied her friend ;---you may guess the consequence --- He made love---she listened with complacency-- and both cursed the envious bars that divided them.---What was to be done ? Suppose they could surmount this obstacle to their happiness, the lad is a younger brother, his patrimony small, and intended for the church ;---but what signifies wealth, where people have laid up an inexhaustible stock of love.—To be short they agreed to make their escape to England, where they were to throw themselves at your feet, no doubt of your pardon.---In consequence of this scheme, Bell, resembling Mademoiselle D'Aubigny, in her size, shape, and air, last Monday evening left the convent, disguised as her friend ; she told the abbess that her brother was come for her, and instantly obtained

obtained leave to go ; in her stead my giddy niece hurried out to her impatient lover ;---a chaise waited,---away they drove ;---not till morning was her flight discovered :---I was instantly sent for ;---Miss D'Aubigny, intimidated by the threats of the sisterhood, revealed what I have above related. I sat off post for Calais,---fortunately the wind had not been favourable for their embarkation ;---after an hour's search, I at last found them in an obscure lodging ; they had, as you may suppose, changed their names ; nevertheless it was no difficult matter to trace them by the description of their persons : Your daughter's uncommon beauty for once was a disadvantage to her, as it helped me to trace out the place of her retreat.---I left my servants and carriage at some distance from the house, and after a few enquiries of the landlady, softly walked up stairs.--threw open the door---when behold ! Bell standing before a looking-glass adjusting her hair ; while her lover stood by her side, one arm encircling her waist, the other pointing out to her, her Venus's charms ; both their delighted eyes fixed on the mirror : I had but a moment to make this remark, the noise of the door made them turn their heads ; your daughter screamed, and sunk into a chair ; the stripling put his hand on his sword,---“ only with my life will I resign her.” Without taking any notice of him, or his fierce airs, I turned to Bell,---“ my carriage waits---will you do me the favour---and I attempted to take her hand---she put it behind her with a sullen air, the lad seeing that he was not likely to get any thing by blustering, changed his tone, he ran and threw himself at my feet, he clasped my knees,---“ Oh, Sir ! pity us---“ divide not hearts that heaven has united.----“ Go, you are a boy,” said I, “ and know not
“ what

“ what you would be at.”---You niece,” turning to her, “ have, I dare say, too much sense, too much laudable pride, to throw yourself into a state of beggary; you have in this affair been carried away by the giddiness of youth, but I am convinced you want only a few minutes leisure to reflect coolly, in order to induce you to quit the dangerous path of imprudence, into which you have thoughtlessly strayed, be thankful that you was overtaken; that you was stopped in your career of folly; never would you have obtained your father’s forgiveness.”---“ Go young gentleman, return to your studies; the most profitable union you can form, will be that for which your friends intend you.” He was going to flame out; but your daughter gave him a significant look, the meaning of which I did not comprehend; she at the same time made some motions with her fingers, which were to be equally incomprehensible: they had however a surprizing effect on her lover, he threw himself into a chair; his air from fierce and impetuous, became pensively resigned.---Bell rose---she gave me her hand, without speaking:---as we passed the young man he put one knee to the ground, eagerly seized her other hand, which she held out to him; he pressed it to his lips.---Oh remember!---was all he had power to say; a burst of tears stopped the passage of his voice.---Your daughter had not a watery eye the whole time, she loves pleasure, her passions are violent, yet does she not seem endued with any great share of sensibility, I mean of the tender kind, her disposition is selfish, from this disposition I prophecy, a new lover will easily efface the one she quitted with so little regret, now is your time, she would on any terms purchase her liberty, the sooner you provide a husband

band for her the better---if you do not, you find she is determined to save you that trouble---again she is safe in her convent. All her motions strictly watched.---Debarred the use of pen and ink. Her friend sent home :---Monsieur L'Abbe, sent to pursue his studies, at a distance from Paris, with a vigilant tutor, as his companion--none but his family and ourselves know any thing of this disagreeable affair, which might cast an indellible blot on your daughter's reputation, they being strict catholicks, and having designed their son for the church, are as averse as we can be to so indiscreet an alliance. We may therefore depend on their taking every precaution to prevent any intercourse between the young people.---I gave strict orders that no one shall upbraid my niece with what had happened. A violent spirit like hers, can only be governed by gentle methods. Harriot received her with the utmost affection, without hinting at the cause of their separation, Bell silently, and rather sullenly returned her caresses.---She no doubt expected a lecture from the abbess; but not a soul in the house took the least notice of what had happened.---Thus all things are settled upon the most amicable footing.---I foresee however, that this calm will not be of any long duration.---Bell is not of a temper to brook confinement.---Get her a husband, I again repeat.---She is not the kind of fruit which will keep.-----I am in great hopes that my wishes in regard to Harriot, will be accomplished; I have excited Lord Ossory's curiosity to see her.----He proposes a trip to Paris in a few weeks; if he likes my girl we shall return to England. I think it will be most prudent to let your daughter accompany us, dangerous would it be to trust her here by herself.

Adieu !

Adieu!----why don't you write!----you are worse than indolent, you are downright lazy. But in spite of all your faults, my heart compels me to subscribe myself your's most affectionately.

CHARLES RIVERS.



LETTER X.

MISS RICHMOND to Lady BAB WILMOT.

O Child! your mad cap of a friend has been engaged in such an adventure—only think of it.---I know not if I mentioned to you in my last, a little smirking white handed Abbe, of whom, for want of better amusement, I took it into my head to become enamoured, *le pauvre garçon*---Ah how he loved—you must know the idea of St. Prue and Eloisa got possession of my light head, I talked, or rather I listened, and he talked so much of love, that I very wisely fancied myself deeply in for it. There was no bearing this,---I began to be mightily foolish, sigh'd, grew pensive, restless, ceased to plague the nuns, and for a mere chimera, plagued myself. What was the most likely remedy for this disease. Marriage—well then, since the man is so teasing on this head, I think I must even take him.---My father is good natured, I his only daughter; he is rich, the poverty of my lover is of the less consequence; in short, if they won't provide me with a husband, I must provide one for myself---to be cooped up in this odious house, prison I should say, where one's passions are doomed to starve; shut up between four walls,---I can bear it no longer.---Death or liberty.---On the strength of these wise reflections I made my escape, no matter how, reached Calais with my swain, from thence proposed to proceed to England.---When behold! contrary winds forced us to remain here at this sea port; and what was still worse, blew my uncle to the place

place of our retreat, when we had sung, laughed and toyed away the time-----Oh, Lady Bab,-----
 “What is life without passion, sweet passion of
 “love.”

Well, I told you my uncle came to damp our joys.---He behaved like a man of sense—in a few words, he clearly shewed me my folly, the word beggary dropped from his lips; away flew Cupid with extinguished fire. I looked at L’Abbe---my eyes were opened---beggary---all his graces vanished.---How could I be such an idiot?---’Tis a little insignificant fellow.---What a figure I should make in the *beau monde* with such a husband?---Without fortune,---without rank,---my father inflexible.---Ah Lord, “’Tis well its no worse.”---And yet, Lady Bab, I was exceeding indiscreet, I do not mean in regard to virtue, and such stuff; but I fear,---I fear,---hang it we were both under age. I must not tell you all, I hate to recollect the foolish adventure: I terrified the poor silly youth, by letting him know, with the language of my fingers, accompanied by a look still more intelligible, that for the present it was necessary to put myself again into the power of my friends; that we must endeavour to have patience; that I could not, wished not, to forget.

---Lady Bab, dear Lady Bab, I must, I will forget it.

I have since my return to prison, found means, in spite of all their vigilance, to write to his sister, who has, on my account, been to her great joy expelled our community; in it I inclosed one for our little Abbe, bidding him rely on my constancy, and trust to my management for our re-union, of which I did not despair; knowing the great influence I had over the heart of my fond father; I charged him not to stir in the affair; continue

peaceably at your studies ; (I say to him in my letter) till I return to England ; cruel fate shall not after that, long separate hearts, which were formed for each other ; when I get into that dear land of freedom, I will endeavour to beguile our tedious absence, by a constant intercourse of letters. If I find my father unexpectedly inflexible, then must we patiently wait till I am of age, when I shall become an independent mistress of a large fortune left me by my grand father, (a fib this, Lady Bab ; many, many, shall I be obliged to tell before I can disentangle myself ;---ah ! if you knew all,—but—but—) then continued I ; my arms shall be open to receive you ; no longer need we wait for the consent of parents.---Let us my dear friend condole ourselves with this happy prospect ;—and thus I trust have I got rid of a troublesome lover, and thus I trust have I also got rid of love ; I mean of the romantic kind ; now will I take the first good offer I meet with, never once will I stop to consult my inclinations, for I hold it as an infallible maxim, that no woman can properly govern her husband, or shine as a fine lady, a modern wife I mean, if she is so foolish as to bestow her heart on the man, to whom she gives her hand—no, let all the love be on his side—the more fondly he doats the better ; the easier task will she find it to make him her dupe—then if she has a mind to amuse herself with *la belle passion*—there are in charming London, a thousand handsome idle young fellows, who have nothing else to do but to furnish her with this amusement-----Thus you see how sensibly I reason on these affairs, and how much I have profited by my early introduction into the *beau monde*. But the wisest of us may at some critical moments be off our guard.----This was my cate with the little abbe, for two long, long,

long, tedious months I had not seen the face of a male creature, except his, romances and iron bars had disordered my imagination,—I played the fool.—It cannot be recalled.—I must do the best to prevent any ill consequences from the mad headed expedition. My demure cousin does not upbraid me with my imprudence, but her eyes speak, though her tongue is silent—before this adventure, I regarded her with a sort of neutrality, but now I heartily hate her; because I cannot help feeling a kind of humbling inferiority; the time may come, when I will either bring her on a level with myself, or else find means to blast that unsullied reputation, of which she is so insolently proud—yes, I have vowed revenge—from this moment I am her foe, though in outward appearance never so much her friend.

Adieu, my kindred soul, you alone are worthy of that title; to you alone will I open the heart of your

ISABELLA RICHMOND.

L E T T E R. XI.

CHARLES RIVERS, Esq. to Sir HARRY RICHMOND.

THIS daughter of yours was born to torment me, but I intend to give you a minute account of the affair, and therefore will not anticipate.---- Last night arrived in Paris, the Right Hon. Lord Offory, who will neither find us equal here, nor has he left his equal, for every engaging quality, behind him; after our first congratulations were over, he expressed his impatience to see Harriot; her idea, said he, haunts me perpetually, and yet my good friend, in spite of the strong prepossessions I experience in her favour, fate may not have destined me the happiness of being allied to you; I must take the liberty to hope, that my choice is still free, and that no offence will be taken—he paused:—I easily understood his meaning, and as easily dissipated his delicate apprehensions; he took his leave, promising to attend me next morning at twelve to the important interview.

I wrote a note to Harriot, informing her of our intentions, but in regard to Lord Offory, I only said, I shall bring with me a young gentleman who is desirous of being introduced to you. I own, I did not wish Bell to be present, therefore, forbore to mention her in my billet---the hour arrived,---and punctual to his time his Lordship arrived also elegantly dressed;---we set off; during our little ride, he was visibly agitated, I was not myself absolutely indifferent as to the issue of our visit.

Harriot made her appearance with a modest air and downcast eye, she gave, by her not having in

in the least degree altered the plain dress she wears in common, a proof that she had either very little vanity, or a great deal of pride; this at first glance appears a paradox. Rousseau has explained it in the description of his Sophia; her dress however, is always elegant and simple, and seemingly unstudied; she looked pretty, at least in my eyes; the sentimental expression of her countenance, would, I thought, suit the taste of Lord Offory.

She received me with her usual respect, then turned to his Lordship, who I presented to her; she timidly raised her eyes to his face, instantly her's was suffused with blushes, but a moment after, she grew pale: in a faltering accent she returned his compliment. I never saw her so embarrassed; he on the contrary appeared perfectly at ease, he examined her with attention, but in a manner delicately cautious lest his glances should add to her already apparent confusion, not a look of either escaped my notice, I had no great reason to be pleased with the serenity in his, I saw only a cool approbation, but in hers,—I wish the girl may be able to stop at that,—while things were in this situation, a sister came to inform me, that my niece begged leave to pay her respects---sly gipsy, she had seen my note---not to me, but to Lord Offory did she intend the compliment.—In she swam, adorned with all the charms that nature could bestow, and embellished with every ornament which a delicate female fancy could select, I never saw such a blaze of charms; Harriot for the first time in her life, I must do her the justice to believe, felt a momentary sensation of envy, she changed colour, and involuntarily retreated a few paces to make way for her too powerful rival. This motion seemed to say—I give up the unequal contest—Bell approached the grate with all the town-

town-bred ease of a fine lady, graceful her air, insinuating her smiles. Lord Ossory was transfixed into a statue---the statue of admiration---she spoke---the harmony of her voice, her sprightly wit compleated her triumph,—he gazed, he listened with rapture,---involuntary praises burst from his lips.---I had seen enough---too much, so arose to take my leave---with visible reluctance, he followed my example; his eyes quitted not the lovely object, till the envious door shut the delightful vision from his sight; I was not in a humour to hear him tell me, as I saw he was preparing to do, that my girl had not answered his expectations, I therefore pretended indispensable business, and politely paying my compliments, hurried from him. And now Sir Harry I expect to see you here,---that your daughter has made a conquest is past a doubt, the alliance is every way desirable,---pardon me, but I must say, that it is much better than she deserves,—her late adventure, I do not mean to call her virtue in question, we must however allow that it was highly indiscreet. I check my pen, on this subject, there is a fate in marriage—always have I remarked that to hear a bachelor who is not in love describe his future wife, is positively to know that when he comes to make his choice, she will be the very reverse of what he then thinks he shall approve.---O man! of what use is thy boasted reason. Adieu, let me know if I may hope for your presence, my first prospect has been fruitless, but I have another in reserve, of the success of which, I cannot doubt,---my old friend Mrs. Williams, has made overtures for her son,---the young man is neither to be much liked, or much disliked, one of the common medly of mortals, that make up the throng,—it is time my girl were settled in life,---till then, I shall never
be

be truly at ease, nor can I till then indulge myself in my wish for retirement. Mr. Williams then must be the man,---instantly will I write to his mother---my daughter has been accustomed to obey, on her part I fear not any opposition---this is my present plan, come and see it executed----- I think we have now a fair prospect of getting rid of both our plagues:----Farewell believe me.

your's sincerely,

CHARLES RIVERS.



L E T T E R X I I .

Miss RICHMOND to Lady BAB WILMOT.

I Have for the present silenced my little Abbe--- I have obtained his solemn promise not to stir in the affair, but to leave the management of it wholly to your humble servant.---You find then the poor soul is not totally void of understanding, since he has sense and discernment enough to discover, that mine is so much superior.---But let us have done with this foolish adventure, I have one of a far more agreeable nature to relate.--- Harriot the other night received a note from her father, she brought it to me, it promised her the company of a beau next morning, not the least palpitation did this cause in the little demure one, not so my experienced heart, it knows the full value of a new conquest, this man be he what he would, I determined to enlist amongst the number of mine, but my prudent uncle had excluded me from the party---a wise precaution in favour of his daughter---no matter, I nevertheless determined to make one---the hour approached I went into Harriot's cell----found her in her usual morning dress.---- Don't you expect company child.---- Yes, every moment---and do you make no alteration; and yet, checking myself ere I finished the indiscreet question, it would be needless trouble, your dress, tho' plain, is inimitably becoming, (a fib this as you may suppose Bab, for her cap absolutely disguised her) you are too handsome, returned she smiling, to practice the little mean arts, of which some of our sex condescend to be guilty. I believe

lieve you speak as you think, but in general, I am sorry to say it, if one asks a female friend's opinion of these matters, one may almost be sure, she will advise you to wear what will be of the least advantage to your charms,---a shrewd remark, to be made by so very good a creature, she knows more of her sex, than I imagined.----A sister entered---your papa, Miss Harriot and another very fine gentleman wait for you, away she tripped to receive the homage of her swain, and I to my faithful glass, by whose aid I hoped, ere long, to share that homage with her.---I dressed, animated with the dear prospect of a new conquest; I omitted no ornament that could add to my beauty; my heart palpitated---my cheeks glowed---my eyes sparkled---and, before I left the agreeable task, every charm blazed forth with unusual lustre---down I flew unsummoned.---Well worth my pain was the conquest I have made,---Yes Bab, I have effectually done his business.---Poor soul! how eagerly he drank in the delicious poison, that I darted from my love inspiring eyes; then had you seen my crest fallen cousin, with such a dolorous countenance robbed of her prey, the father too robbed of his hopes, while I sat like Helen in the night, "When Troy was sacked unconscious of the mischief I had wrought."---But who do you think this lover is?---O child, the very man a woman of spirit would wish for.---Lord Offory---the grave, the sentimental, Lord Offory---rich, generous, handsome, open-hearted, incapable of deceit himself, and suspecting none in others; this is the character I have heard of him---a character which his engaging countenance confirms.---What a fortunate creature am I? I make no doubt of becoming his help mate, his wife we will rather say, for I know no one living thing

thing in which I shall help him, but to spend his money.---Do you want a more particular description of his person---a true female.----But child, you forget I intend him for my husband, and in that case you know, one regards not such trifles; however, I think I told you above, that he is handsome; I could wish he was less so, and yet, I hope I shall not be so weak as to love him.---To say truth, the man is not without his attractions, but if I was to entertain a slight partiality for the wretch, matrimony is an effectual remedy; besides, I am of so fickle, so inconstant a nature, that I defy the finest man in England, to fix for a week together my fluttering heart.---but a husband!---heavens!----the very sound of the word extinguishes each fond desire.----Lord Ossory then is, as he ought to be, sufficiently indifferent to your humble servant.---not so my little cousin.----With far different eyes does she view him, alas! poor girl 'tis her first love, a deadly disease for a soft romantic soul like her, she pines and dies "For "hopeless love and piercing care, consumes her "early prime,---the rose grows pale and leaves "her cheek;" this circumstance is to me an additional cause of triumph: when I am married, I'll invite the poor wretch to pass a month or two with me, on purpose to make her a mortified witness of my felicity.----Oh, I shall have the transport to see her die by inches, or, if I could contrive by thus throwing the love sick nymph in his way,----I have a joyous plan in my head---strict as he is in his principles, and outrageously virtuous as she affects to be, I do not despair---then if I can but tempt him to fall into a scrape of this nature, the coast will be clear for your little Bell.-----

I have

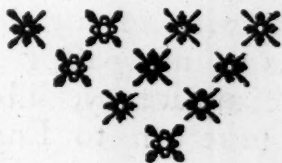
The PRECIPITATE CHOICE.

49

I have not time, he is below,---the dear man.
---Harriot, child, dry thy dove like eyes,---“come
“be a good girl, be a good girl until I come to
“thee again.” Poor thing, ha! ha! ha! she
must not hear me laugh. But the man waits.

Farewell, ever your's,

ISABELLA RICHMOND.



E

LET-

LETTER XIII.

Lord OSSORY to Monsieur LA FARE.

I Trust the kind wishes of my friend are now in a fair way of being accomplished; yes, I have at length discovered the charming maid “who is, “I hope, formed for love and me.” You who are such an admirer of beauty, will be enchanted with her’s; ’tis past description. Oh my dear La Fare; how perfect will be the happiness of your Ossory, when united to this adorable angel; how will she embellish that retreat, of which I am so fond. Imagination cannot form a more enviable felicity, than that which I shall enjoy in the society of a friend like you, and a wife like my Isabella. Her father arrived last night in Paris, he every way approves of my alliance; I meet with no obstacles to my passion; the heavenly maid with sweet complacency, listens to my suit, we are preparing to return to England; where, as soon as the settlements can be drawn, our nuptials will take place; my impatience is inexpressible; you will not wonder at this, when you behold my charming bride. In my life, I never saw so striking, so dazzling a beauty, nor is her mind less perfect; such lively wit, such just and noble sentiments, and, what more than any thing endears her to me, and promises the best foundation for our mutual happiness, is, that in most things, I discover in her a similarity of taste; she is, like me, a passionate admirer of the country: prefers an agreeable retreat, with the society of a few select friends, to the noise, bustle, and unsatisfying amusements

amusements of the *beau monde*. She has experienced both, and speaks with virtuous indignation of the conduct of modern fine ladies; yet has not a tincture of censoriousness in her amiable composition.

My passion gains new force every time I converse with her, she tells me however, with engaging frankness, that she was not always the good girl, she now flatters herself she may, without vanity, pretend to be; "early," said she, "was I introduced into what is called life; and for some time, like other young people, eagerly entered into scenes of dissipation, but very soon did the novelty wear off; public places became insipid by constant repetition, and even this gloomy mansion," continued she smiling, "had to me attractions, as it appeared a comfortable assylum from noise and folly." While she thus enchants my soul by the justness of her sentiments, with what delight do I contemplate my future wife, the sweet augments of my joys, and soother of my cares; but I forget, you will all this while imagine that I am speaking of my late guardian's daughter, Miss Rivers, on whose account I came to Paris. Misled by a lively fancy, I was strongly possessed with an idea, that in her's I should find my destined heart; and to do her justice, next to her lovely cousin, she is the most amiable girl I ever met with. I know not what impression she might have made, tho' I was not immediately struck with her charms, which are of that kind, that gently, and by degrees insinuate themselves, and fix a lasting empire in the heart: I know not I say, but she in time might have fixed my choice, had not the transporting Isabella made her appearance, with such a superior, such a ravishing blaze of beauty; that she perfectly dazzled my senses,

rendered me blind to every other object but herself,—no longer had reason any thing to say in the affair,—astonished; over powered by her charms, I have ceased to be a free agent, and at the first became her slave.—Well is it for me, that she has merit as well as those powerful personal attractions, for I feel, let her mind have been what it would, I was irresistably doomed to love. However unworthy she might have been of my esteem, but thank heaven this is not the case, for she is all that mortal man could wish: Mr. Rivers seemed disappointed, but not offended at my being compelled to decline the honour of his alliance; he appears however, less pleased than I could wish, at that I am going to enter into with Sir Henry Richmond; out of Regard for him, I as much as possible, restrain in his presence, the overflowings of my heart in regard to my Isabella, but when I involuntarily do justice to her merit, he looks dissatisfied; tells me, with a forced smile, that love is blind, that if my passion was more moderate it would stand a better chance to be lasting; this kind of behaviour, however, in him is easily accounted for, the unfortunate conduct of his wife, has given him an unfavourable opinion of the sex; but never shall the children, with me, suffer for the sins of their parents. I have ever made it my study to divest myself of prejudice.—Isabella is an angel tho' her mother is a -----; she will soon be mine. let me for both her dear daughter's sake and my own, draw a veil over her foibles.

I shall tire you La Fare, pardon me.—— I have done—— I will drop my darling theme.—— Do me the favour to hasten as much as possible, those improvements, in and about the house, which

which you are so obliging as to superintend ; my Isabella shall thank you for your pains ; — shall smile her approbation, and amply reward you, by admiring the elegance of your taste.

I am,

dear La Fare,
sincerely your's,

OSSORY.



L E T T E R XIV.

Miss RICHMOND to Lady BAB WILMOT.

IN a few weeks---ah! still an age!---Lady Bab Wilmot, will I hope, behold Bell Richmond, metamorphosed into, a wife---A wife! delightful---no longer are they ranked amongst the number of tame domestic animals. No longer are chaste keepers at home, &c.-----but giddy fluttering things to be every where met with, the before mentioned place excepted, Oh! I could die of laughing, when I think, how effectually I have duped the poor love sick soul, my future spouse,---heaven bless him! I never before knew how much I excelled in dear dissimulation; I have converted the giddy volatile Bell Richmond, into a being almost as soberly sentimental, as little Rivers, talk of domestic joy,---the serene pleasures of a country life,---the natural comforts of friendly society. I sometimes harrangue so long on this subject, that I fancy myself seated amidst a set of rustics, drawing for a king and queen, or playing at cross purposes,---horrid---Lord Offory!----I'll warrant yet, he expects to find in me his future help mate, a second Andromache, sitting the live long day spinning amongst her maidens,---heavens! what will be the honest man's astonishment, when I unmask; but of that I must beware 'till he takes me for better for worse.----It requires all my skill to keep my affairs *en train*, I am pestered with letters from the little Abbe, by means of his sister; our correspondence hitherto remains a secret, he has heard of Offory's visits, and takes
upon

upon him to be jealous forsooth,---horrid creature
 ---I now hate him as much as I once fancied I
 loved ; however, I have again made shift to silence
 him, by telling him that his lordship comes to see
 my cousin, to whom he is soon to be united, that
 my father is here also, that he takes me with him
 to England, that I find him inflexible, tho' I have
 omitted no endeavour to soften him in our favour;
 that we must therefore patiently wait until I am
 of age, and mistress of my fortune, and at liberty
 to follow my inclinations ---I wish he was hanged
 for making me tell so many fibs.---Oh ! do you
 know, my swain tells me, Rivers has found out a
 mate for my cousin?---such a wretched mortal, the
 girl surely will never take him; tho' for my part,
 I think any thing on earth, that is rich, and of
 certain rank, good enough for a husband; and
 perhaps the greater fool, the better, except he is
 one of the mulish breed; and to do poor William's
 justice, I believe he has very little of the ob-
 stinate in his composition. Williams you cry,---
 Yes, child, he is to be the happy man.---Don't
 you remember him, when we *ensemble* spent a
 month at Lord Walton's, the butt of her raillery.
 The good natured spaniel who used to fetch and
 carry at the word of command,---the white hand-
 ed boy of one and twenty, who excelled us so
 much at netting; who embroidered the hems of
 his grand-mother's petticoats, ha ! ha ! ha ! a joy-
 ous mortal,---civil and inoffensive---a commodi-
 ous character for a husband; but besides these
 agreeable accomplishments, he is possessed of what
 renders him truly a man of merit, viz, Six thou-
 sand a year, clear of all incumbrances, except his
 lady mother's jointure, and that he no doubt cheer-
 fully pays, to her who has so prettily trained him
 up in the way he should go; who has never lost
 sight

fight of him since he became an inhabitant of this dear wicked world ; and who will not let go his leading strings, 'till she resigns them into the hands of his wife ; who treats him with a pair of speck and span clean gloves at the country assizes, with a shilling in his pocket ; chooses a partner for him ; lets him dance till eleven, then muffing him up in a white handkerchief, takes him home, gives him warm negus and puts him to bed ; who tells him, when in company, how to place his hands ; draws herself up and winks at him when he sits in a lounging posture, with every now and then, " Dicky don't pick your nose ; don't kick your heels child, &c. &c. &c."---And this:---this is the man.---The man did I say ?---He has no pretensions to any thing that is manly.---but this creature for whom I cannot find a proper name, is destined for the lord and master of Hariot Rivers, ---a girl, delicate, elegant, sentimental, even to excess ; Oh ! she will expire of absolute spleen, and vapours, long ere the end of the honey-moon. So much the better--had I my wish, not one single prude, should in all England (that delightful land of freedom) be suffered to rear their stately haughty heads ; I would extirpate them root and branch. If this match takes place, she will be sufficiently wretched, if it does not, then my plan of revenge shall-----Revenge, you cry, for what?----For daring to be more virtuous, more worthy than myself ; for knowing some of my faults, and having the insolent generosity not to upbraid me with them ; for compelling me to submit to this humiliating obligation ; I say again, I will be revenged. ---and so ends the chapter. Adieu.

ISABELLA RICHMOND.

L E T-

LETTER XV.

Lord OSSORY to Monsieur LA FARE.

OUR wished for return to England, has for some time past been delayed, on Miss Rivers's account, the sweet girl is but just recovered from a dangerous illness; some hints that were dropped by her friends of her intended union with Williams is suspected to be the cause of her indisposition; her spirits are as delicate as her frame---do you know, she is I find, on a second examination, a much more lovely creature than I at first imagined; the case is, I at my first visit only saw her, but on my last I heard as well as saw; and it is in conversation that she not only shews the charms of her mind, but those of her fine face to perfection; the air of it changes according to the different sentiments she utters; and as her's are always just and elegant, so the expression of her countenance gives the most captivating graces to her features.---Do not by these just encomiums suspect me of inconstancy---no, a heart capable of that, is incapable of love; Isabella is still and ever must remain sole mistress of mine; but I own I feel a friendship, a tender sort of sympathy for her engaging cousin, the thoughts of so fine a creature going to be sacrificed to an insignificant being, like Williams, excites my pity; alas, I fear her fate is irrevocably fixed, the timid maid will never have courage to oppose the will of an arbitrary father, whom she has from childhood been accustomed implicitly to obey;---the prospect of her misery, for what else can be the consequence
of

of so ill concerted an union, damps my happiness--accursed be that selfish heart, which feels only for itself--mine is not of that number. I saw her this morning, and ever since then, in spite of the charms of Isabella, she has ingrossed a great part of my thoughts.---If I have formed a true idea of my lovely mistress, she would esteem me the more for interesting myself in the welfare of her, who is not only a relation but a friend.

I wish I could prevail on Mr. Rivers to change his purpose, but in these affairs he is unpersuadably obstinate, he has no tenderness for the sex, he is more studious of his own ease than of his daughter's happiness; disgusted with the world, he wishes to fly to retirement; but ere he can gratify his favourite whim, he thinks it necessary to put his Harriot under the protection of a husband; from the fatal conduct of her mother he has lost all confidence in woman kind, he trembles for his honour, should he trust her in the world; from infancy, he has confined her to the gloomy inclosure of a nunnery, nor dare he take her from thence, 'till a husband's arms are open to receive her,---poor Harriot. I accompanied him this morning, as I before said, on a visit to her, and my angel---the latter did not for some time make her appearance;--if she has any foible, it is a too great regard for dress; I have often to wait till she has finished the labours of the toilet.----How unnecessary are ornaments to a form like hers, by nature so complete. Ah! could she, if she loved like me, waste that time in trifles, which would be so much more delightfully employed in the mutual effusion of two enamoured hearts.---Harriot is as indifferent about that, to most female's important affair, as the other is fond of it; there is in her appearance an elegant neatness, which I
hardly

hardly ever saw so happily blended in any other woman; she has as I told you been indisposed, therefore she came down to us in her morning dress; a spotless white muslin, sprigged by her own fair hands, and trimmed with fine point; her ruffles of the same, as was her cap, made like that worn by country girls, adorned with a pale pink ribbon; it is impossible to give you an idea of the very pretty unstudied simple air this same cap gave her face, rendered the more dazzling fair, and delicate by her late illness; a black velvet bracelet round each lovely arm; a collar of the same round her neck; on my word, I never beheld such an inviting object, though I may have seen (my Richmond for example) more striking dazzling beauties, and shall this insinuating gentle maid be sacrificed to a wretch like Williams;---poor Harriot, why is it not in my power to save you from such unmerited misery.----A modest blush on her entrance gave her additional charms, a momentary blush for soon the rose gave place to the lilly; her father took her hand and softened by her plaintive air, tenderly enquired after her health, she sighed, and a tear stole down her cheek; change of air, continued he, will, I hope be of service to you; are you well enough recovered, think ye to undertake a voyage to England, do you not long to be released from your confinement my dear? this kind speech he accompanied with a smile, alas Sir, returned she sighing, what joy can that prospect give me,-- then I shall only exchange a prison, which I never found irksome, for a more lasting, a dreadful bondage. O Sir! pity me, let me, if you dare not trust me in the world but in a married state, still continue within this pious inclosure.---My religion forbids me to take the veil, but most chearfully, most contentedly will I live single,

single, a pensioner for life, since you chuse not to rely on my discretion, since you have unhappily imbibed an unfavourable opinion of our sex. Trust at least these bolts and bars---Let all my motions be strictly watched---Place over me a guard as vigilant as you please, never will I murmur. Only spare your child, and sacrifice her not to a man she cannot love.---And how know you that you shall not love him? cried her father, sternly. O, Sir, the character I have heard.---And from whom, interrupted he, still more exasperated, from your giddy cousin? He then uttered some invectives against my Isabella, which I cannot bear to repeat, nor did I calmly hear her censured. He apologized for the warmth of his temper.

I am interrupted, my dear La Fare.---'Tis of no consequence.---I only wished to repeat the conversation, that you might join with me in admiring Miss Rivers's just and truly refined sentiments. What a charming description did she give of what matrimony might be, were a union of hearts to be the foundation! And how affectingly did she paint the misery that must be the consequence of that with which she is threatened! But all her eloquence was lost on her inflexible father.

Adieu. We shall now in a few days begin our journey. I long exceedingly to assure you in person how sincerely I am your's, &c.

O S S O R Y.

LET-

L E T T E R XVI.

Miss RIVERS to Miss ELIZA DUDLEY.

CHIDE me not, my dear Eliza; my spirits are weak. I have been ill. I could not write. But ah, never injure me so far as to suspect I could forget my beloved, my only friend: What is the matter with my eyes; They flow incessantly. Indeed I have but too much cause to weep. O that you were here, that in your sympathising bosom I might hide my blushes, while I reveal my weakness. I die with shame even when my heart whispers to myself the fatal secret. Why, alas, was this most amiable of men thrown in my way? A hopeless passion consumes me. But this is not all. Patiently would I endeavour to submit to my own wretched fate, but to know that he is also doomed to misery, 'tis too much. Eliza, his rash choice will be his ruin. That artful dissembler, my cousin, by wearing before him the mask of hypocrisy, has shewn herself to me in her true colours. I know her utterly unworthy of his heart. Think not that I view her with the malignant envious eye of a rival. Would it were so. Alas! I have convincing proofs how little she is formed to contribute to his felicity. Their taste, their disposition, opposite as light and darkness, with what anguish do I behold the sensible, amiable, unsuspecting youth, duped by her artifice! But who shall attempt to undeceive him? Alas, too soon his own fatal experience will convince him of his error. How he idolizes her charms, with what fervor, yet delicate tenderness

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THE PRINCIPAL CHOICE.

does he manifest his passion! She affects to love with equal ardour, while she cannot conceal, even from me her triumph at having so artfully imposed on him. Indeed, Eliza, a heart like hers is incapable of that passion. She has not one grain of tender sensibility in her composition. If she had, no man on earth is more formed to awaken it than Lord Ossory. There is in his countenance that winning, irresistible something, that is far more seducing than the most regular beauty. His eyes, such softness, such expression, so languishingly sweet! Fatal to your poor Harriot has been their tender glances, for tender they are even to me; he cannot divest them of it, the language of love is so natural to them. From the attentive complacency with which he treats me, I flatter myself that I may, in time, aspire to the honour of his friendship; with that I must endeavour to be satisfied. It will also, alas, soon be criminal to view him in any other light. Every thing is now in readiness for our return to England. Soon shall I have the happiness to embrace my Eliza. That pleasing hope supports my drooping spirits---Well may they droop.---I have not yet told you half my misery. I cannot bear either to think or write on the horrid subject.---Let me not dwell on it. In a few words, my father is determined to sacrifice me to a wretch. Eliza, it must not, cannot be; death will free me from his cruel power, and nothing but death can, I fear, save me from the threatened misery. My tears, my entreaties are ineffectual; he is even deaf to Lord Ossory's persuasive eloquence: That generous nobleman has condescended to become my advocate; but, alas, all he has been able to procure for me is a few month's respite. Those months, O my friend, where do you think they are

are to be passed? With the happy happy bride at her lord's country seat. Sir Harry has a small but pleasantly situated lodge in the neighbourhood, where my father and he propose to take up their residence, that the former may be near enough to watch over the conduct of his unfortunate girl. The odious Williams is also to be Lord Ossory's guest. Think, then, Eliza, what your Harriot must suffer from such a situation; a mortified witness of her rival's felicity, pestered with the addresses of the man she hates,---spies placed over her---a hopeless passion to combat with, at the very time she is under the same roof with the object who inspired it, she must see him daily, must daily converse with him, and yet cease to love.---What a task!---All that is possible I will attempt. Either I must conquer it, or it will conquer me, and lay me in the silent tomb. No matter how soon. This scene of vanity closes on me. Who would wish to be a restless inhabitant of this disordered world? I feel a reluctance to lay down my pen, it is a great relief to me to pour my griefs into your gentle bosom. You must permit me, when we meet, to renew the melancholy theme.---This is the last letter you will receive from me, dated from the dear, the peaceful convent. I grieve to think of my parting from the amiable women with whom I have spent so many tranquil years. In a convent, as well as in the world there is a mixture of good and bad; but in this house the good is happily predominant. Many of the nuns, from sense, sweetness of disposition, and unaffected piety, are intitled to our greatest respect. In this I am sure Eliza will agree with her

Affectionate friend,

HARRIOT RIVERS.

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. L E T -

L E T T E R XVII.

From the same to the same.

AT length the important day—the day which to Lord Ossory was a day of exquisite love and rapture, the day which to Isabella was a day of triumph and exultation, and the day which in your poor Harriot's breast excited such various emotions is pass'd good, blessed as it was to some, like other days it ends in night, all the world but your unfortunate friend are retired to rest,

“ Sleep lights on lids unsullied with a tear.”

Mine are not of that number, I must not therefore expect a visit from the welcome guest, instead of it, I sit down to fulfil the promise I made ---My dear Eliza, you are too virtuous, too amiable to gain the good graces of my cousin.----I know she would not like you, but I thought she would have included you in our party, that she might the better carry on the farce of friendship to me, (how my disposition is changed,) I am become suspicious, censorious,---nay, even I fear a little envious,---but I cannot---do not:---Ah! how should I love Lady Ossory (must I call her) Well my dear, the pleasure of your company your presence which I never more stood in need of, was denied me. With what soothing gentleness, did you endeavour, the night before, when I bade you a reluctant adieu, to arm my weak heart for the approaching dreadful trial. Yet in spite of all your sensible arguments I arose next morning, without

without having once closed my eyes, more dead than alive, trembling, agitated to such a degree, that I could hardly keep myself from fainting, while my maid put on me those ornaments, which I was obliged to wear in honour of the happy bride. When the task was finished I dismissed her, and raising my eyes to the glass, beheld a face so pale, so pathetically moving, (if I may so express myself) that I burst into tears, which flowed the faster, for my gazing on my streaming eyes.--- Thus was I indulging a sad luxury of grief, when I received a summons to breakfast; it was some time ere by breathing on my handkerchief I could render myself fit to make my appearance; I endeavoured to muster up a little pride. Weak, imprudent Harriot, cried I, Lord Offory does not love you, it is true, but why will you also compel him to despise you.--- This thought roused me, I hurried down lest the impression of it should wear off, there I found the most amiable of men, seated by his sparkling, smiling Isabella; holding between both his, her passive hand, his fine eyes fixed on hers with such inexpressible delight, transported with her charms; she engrossed every faculty of his soul. I felt at that moment emotions for which I detest myself.--- I started and put up an ejaculatory prayer, for grace to conquer the corruptions of my fallen nature; I recollected Milton's description of the d---l, when he contemplated the happiness of our first parents. Alas! cursed envy, never more shall you find room in my heart.--- You have seen.--- You admire my cousin's uncommon beauty; but on this her bridal day, that beauty shone out with redoubled lustre; well it might for--- ah! how inviting, how delightful were the smiling prospects which opened to her view; light were her spirits, easy her deportment.

ment, no rustic bashfulness, no timid modesty to embarrass her,---but let me resume the thread of my story.---The company whom I found assembled in the breakfast parlour, were besides the bridegroom and bride, Sir Henry Richmond, Lady Bab Wilmot, and my father. This fine lady of quality is my cousin's confidant and bosom friend, and well are their dispositions suited to each other, I know not whether or not you recollect her, but I remember she was at St. James's-square, the first time I embraced my Eliza after my return to England.----Bell and her retired soon after you came in, I dare say she escaped your notice, it is indeed that of the other sex which she alone wishes, and labours to attract.---In this she is, thanks to her rank, tolerably successful; her person is naturally passable, but she renders it ridiculous and disgusting by her unsufferable affectation; she is lively, haughty, coquette and satirical. This slight description may suffice for my sister bride-maid, who had omitted no ornament that could supply the defects of nature, the little bustle she made in paying her compliments to me, which like other fine ladies she always does in a high key. Made Lord Ossory turn his head, he rose politely, led me to a seat, with a sort of tender pity pressed my hand;----“you have not yet my “sweet cousin,” said he, “recovered the fatigue “of your voyage, but I hope the fresh country “air, to which we are hastening, will produce a “favourable change.” I forced a smile looked my gratitude for his kind attention to my health, but durst not trust my voice. He again placed himself by his blooming Isabella, she did not however now so wholly engross his attention but that he sometimes addressed his pleasing discourse to me, and that always in the gentle soothing voice
of

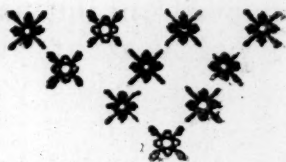
of friendship; Lady Bab, for want of a younger beau flirted with my uncle, whose person is still excessively agreeable and who has all the gallantry and vivacity, requisite to the character of a fine gentleman; my father had been amusing himself with the newspapers, but soon after I came in, he beckoned to me, I followed him to a window at some distance from the rest of the company. "I had always intended," said he, "to let you remain abroad, 'till I had provided a husband for you, in part I have kept my resolution. This husband is provided, and had I not been teased out of my plan. You would this day have followed your cousin's example, I already begin to repent my weak compliance with your caprice, a strange weight hangs on my spirits. I dread the consequence of unnecessary delay, I have yielded but to—what purpose can it answer, you must ere long, give your hand to Mr. Williams, nothing shall tempt me to violate the promise I have made both to him and his mother; I expect therefore that you will conquer your foolish prejudice, and prepare yourself to receive him as your intended husband, Lord Ossory has, at my request invited him to be present at his nuptials, in a few moments he will be here;" (I started and changed colour,) "None of your female airs and graces," continued my father, "I am determined not to be trifled with, your fate is determined, I called you aside in order to prepare you for his visit, this you must allow is acting with all the tenderness of a parent, do you in return, act with that submissive duty which becomes a child, you never saw the man therefore, talk like a foolish girl when you say you cannot love him, he is young, handsome, rich, and what is still better
" a man

“ a man of morals.”---As he spoke this we heard a loud rap at the door ; it is him exclaimed I with a terrified emotion, and sunk almost fainting into a chair, I was not mistaken, in a few moments, a tall aukward figure entered the room, dressed with inelegant finery, tho’ early in the morning.-----I was going, my dear Eliza, to repeat the foolish compliments he paid me. But I have not patience to dwell on the hated subject; his conversation was interlarded with scraps of plays, the bombast of which mixed up with his own home spun country dialect, formed a most ridiculous contrast, and might truly be called the art of sinking in poetry. During breakfast I contrived to make my escape to the other side of the table, leaving him next to Lady Bab, who was pleased with an opportunity of shewing her talents for wit and ridicule, she played him off most unmercifully to the great entertainment of Sir Harry, and the great displeasure of my father, who severely chid me with his eyes for having changed my seat. Odious as this man appears to me when viewed in the light of a husband,---yet when I considered him unconnected with myself, I was sorry to see him made a butt of. Want of sense is the fault of nature, not he that labours under this defect but those who take advantage of it, are the persons who ought to excite our contempt. As Miss Richmond had insisted on being married with a special licence, we had not what she called the vulgar parade of going to church, about twelve we retired to the drawing room, where the ceremony was performed by the bishop of London, who is related to the family.---The bride appeared perfectly at ease while repeating those vows, the solemnity of which made me tremble, I ventured to steal a glance at Lord Offory, in his amiable

amiable countenance, I beheld all the marks of genuine piety, with a composed and manly voice, he plighted his faith, it was plainly to be seen, that his heart seconded his lips. While he swore to live for her alone, till death should dissolve their union,---a shivering seized me---ah! then said I, from this moment I must tear the dear image from my breast,---from this moment to love thee is a crime.---Now then Harriot kneeling at the foot of the altar,---make a sacrifice of thy hopeless unfortunate passion: Lord Offory is lost to thee for ever!---Assist me heaven!---Agitated with these painful emotions, my eyes grew dim, my head grew giddy, and I sunk senseless on the carpet, when I recovered, I found myself on my bed, my maid stood by the side of it, and my father at some distance, I uttered a deep sigh, he approached, "Harriot, child what is the matter with you, "your illness has thrown a damp over the general "joy, you have delayed our journey, Lord Offory "would not set out without you. Poor Mr. "Williams is in despair, indeed you have greatly "alarmed us all."---"I am sorry for it Sir," replied I, "but I beg they will no longer wait for "me, I am not sufficiently recovered to make one "of the happy party."---"But indeed you must "my amiable cousin," cried an insinuating voice, which I knew to be Lord Offory's,--"This smoky town will never agree with your delicate "constitution;"---he advanced and took my hand as he spoke this, I blushed, and conscious of my weakness too hastily withdrew it, then wept for fear I had betrayed myself.---But pardon me Eliza, I am tiresomely minute, it would fill a quire to describe half the painful emotions the struggles of my heart, during a day which to me appeared
an

an age. I must lay down my pen. not able to hold it any longer, quite overpowered with fatigue, I will throw myself on the bed,---how delightful is the situation of this house, so elegant---ah! I can say no more----a lieu! adieu! I am in the next apartment to Lord Ossory,---peaceful and refreshing ever be his slumbers,----

H. RIVERS.



LET-

L E T T E R XVIII.

The same to the same.

AT length I return to my favourite amusement: I have been very ill, my dear Eliza. My fever was violent while it lasted. To-day, for the first time, I took a short airing, accompanied by my maid. The rest of the family are too much engaged with their pleasures to dedicate any of their time to a poor, low-spirited invalid. I ought however, in justice, to except the amiable Offory. Nothing could equal his friendly anxiety for me during my illness. Every hour of the day did he call at the door of my apartment to enquire how I did. The most skilful physicians were by his order sent for from town----my father also behaved with a tenderness which excites in my breast the warmest sentiments of gratitude; but it was my cousin on whom I meant justly to reflect, when I talked of being neglected: neither her or her friend Lady Bab once condescended to honour me with a visit; both violently apprehensive of fevers, it seems. Such was their excuse. Mr. Williams, honest man, never having been accustomed to think or act for himself, did as he saw the rest do. When they expressed sorrow for my illness, he endeavoured to look sorrowful; when they sent up to enquire after me, he followed their lead, and joined in the ceremony. This account I had from Sally, who added, that he was very assiduous about Lady Bab Wilmot. Heaven grant she may have made a conquest of him. I doubt not but her Ladyship would snap at such an offer, as her
rank

rank is much superior to her fortune. I was near a fortnight confined to my room, and still find myself extremely weak and languid. My indisposition needed not to have confined me so long, but I wished to be retired. I trembled at the thoughts of being again exposed to the too attractive graces of Lord Offory's conversation. I spent my time in endeavouring, by the aids of religion and philosophy, to cure my heart of its now criminal weakness. I flattered myself that I had, in some measure, succeeded; and therefore entered the parlour where the company were assembled with an air of composure, placing great confidence in the strength of my laudable resolutions. Fortunately Lord Offory had rode out to pay some morning visits, and was not yet returned. I found only Lady Offory, Lady Bab, my uncle, Mr. Williams, and Monsieur La Fare. The latter sat by my cousin, tuning her guitar; Sir Harry was engaged at piquet with Lady Bab; and Mr. Williams was amusing himself with her ladyship's netting, at which he is very expert. Such was the arrangement of the little party. Lady Offory looked like an angel; the country air had given an additional glow to her fine complexion; and her morning dress was inimitably becoming. The agreeable Frenchman seemed, by the homage he paid her with his large black eyes, to be perfectly sensible of her attractions. You must permit me to give you a slight sketch of this gentleman's history. As Lord Offory's friend, he deserves the honour of being introduced to my Eliza. I know not myself the particulars of his story, which, I am told, is uncommonly unfortunate. All I have hitherto learnt is, that he is descended from a younger branch of a noble family; that in consequence of a love affair, he fought

fought a duel, and killed his antagonist, whose rank and power being superior to his, obliged him to fly his country, where no pardon was to be hoped for; that in leaving his country, he was also obliged to leave all he had, escaping only with his life.--He changed his name, and fled to Holland, I think it was at Bluxels; that fortune, weary of persecuting him, presented him with an opportunity of rendering a signal service to Lord Offory, who was on his travels. Of what nature this service was, I have not yet been informed; but from that moment the generous young Englishman took him under his protection. He accompanied his patron hither; as soon as they arrived here, Lord Offory, whose favours are rendered doubly valuable, by the noble delicacy with which they are conferred made him independent, by settling on him a very considerable annuity, he lives with his benefactor from choice, is treated with so much respect by all the domestics, and has so much command in the family, that one can hardly tell which of the two is master. My Lord doats on him; and indeed he is so sensible, so agreeably gay, and in every respect so accomplished, that one cannot wonder that he should gain such an ascendancy over his worthy friend. He has, it seems, proposed himself, as a proof of his gratitude, to become tutor to Lord Offory's son and heir, if heaven should bless him with one---a task for which he appears admirably qualified. For this purpose, he is engaged in abridging Rousseau's System of Education, selecting what is practicable, and omitting what he and Lord Offory think exceptionable. This man is thought, by the belles of our society, uncommonly handsome;---he is very well for a

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foreigner:

foreigner:---but, I must own, his chief recommendation to me is, his being honoured with the friendship of Lord Offory.---This subject has run away with my pen.---I was going to describe the reception I met with.---Mr. Williams was the first who espied me; as I entered the room, he started up, and with ridiculous emphasis repeated,

“Angels and ministers of grace defend us.

“Art thou,” &c.

Then advancing, led me to a chair, and swore I looked divinely.-----“Since you allow her

“to be a heavenly ghost,” cried Lady Bab, laughing, “your question of ‘bring’st with thee bliss from hell,’ was needless. “It must be owned.”

added she, “you have a pretty and very uncommon style of complimenting your mistress. To

“have called her an angel, is what any fool might

“have done; but to call her a ghost was indeed

“a superior stretch of folly.” “Mr. Williams,”

“said Sir Harry, “has shewn great judgment in

“the choice of a wife; he is a body, and if man

“and wife become one, he will then also have a

“soul.” “But, I fear,” cried Mr. La Fare, with

vivacity, “that if this match should take place,

“the apostle’s saying will be reversed, and the spi-

“rit will war against the flesh.” Then turning

to me, he paid me a compliment, with all the easy

gallantry of a Frenchman, saying, that my late

illness had so refined my beauty, and rendered my

complexion so transparently clear, that it was no

wonder Mr. Williams mistook me for one of the

celestial tribe. While every one was thus dis-

playing their wit at that poor man’s expence, he

was at the expence of my Dresden ruffles, endeavouring to disengage his netting pin, which, in

handing

The PRECIPITATE CHOICE. 7

standing, me to a seat, he had awkwardly entangled them. "I used to wish," said Lady Bab, "to have our beaus about town taught a little needle-work, or netting, to keep them out of mischief; but I find Mr. Williams has such a happy knack of doing every thing, that the very thing which I proposed as a remedy, is, in his hands, the cause of." "Spare him," interrupted La F  re, laughing, "for if he should unfortunately tear the Lady's ruffles, he can perhaps do more than your Ladyship could, that is mend them again." The entrance of Lord Offory and my father, put an end to this chit chat. Oh! Eliza, what became of all my boasted resolutions at the sight of this amiable nobleman! how superior is he to the rest of his sex! how delicate, how soothing were his compliments on my recovery! He seated himself by me, he looked at me with such tender sympathy!--I must, I will console myself with the pleasing hope, that your poor Harriot is honoured with some share of his esteem. It shall be my study to deserve it. My father was visibly displeased at Mr. Williams's behaviour. Lady Bab engrossed his whole attention with open mouth, and round unthinking face---he sat staring with wonderment at all she said,---had always a laugh and a bravo at her service.---This affair goes as I could wish.---My only fear is, that when his lady mother comes (and she is daily expected) things will take a less favourable turn;---so much does the tall boy of twenty-one stand in awe of her.---Of love he is utterly incapable-- but he likes Lady Bab, because she is so pure and merry; and, as he said the other day, he should wish for such a kind of wife of all things, because she would keep him laughing from morning to night.---I fear, honest

friend, thought I, it would be of the wrong side of the mouth, if once you have taken her for better for worse.----As to me, I am a restraint upon him ;--a pretty young body, he said I was, (as my cousin told me) but then so plaguy grave, that he did not know what to say to me: and, indeed, when my father contrives to have us left to a *tete a tete*, nothing can be more ridiculous.--I sink into a reverie---he talks of the weather---admires my work---offers to teach me a new method of netting.---I answer at random---then begins a game at cross purposes, to which I put an end by making my exit. If the match breaks off, as heaven grant it may, I see clearly it will be on his side, so I need give myself but little trouble; he is already heartily disgusted with his intended bride---my father has no room to complain of my behaviour.---I always treat him with civility---never refuse to be alone with him. All I fear, as I said before, is, the arrival of this Mrs. Williams.-----Adieu, my beloved Eliza; I am not good at description, or I would with pleasure obey your commands.---The situation is delightfully romantic; the house is large, commodious, and elegantly furnished; and the master of it---Oh! who can pay attention to any thing else, when he is nigh! What a happy woman is my cousin!--his behaviour to her is enchanting; but she, I fear, has not yet lost her relish for flirting and the admiration of a multitude.--Unconscionable! to be admired by Lord Offory might satisfy the ambition of an empress. Believe me ever

Your's,

HARRIOT RIVERS.

L E T T E R XIX.

Lady OSSORY to Lady BAB WILMOT.

TIS monstrous provoking, my dear Bab, that your mother should take it into her head to be sick, at a time so unseasonable both for yourself and your friend.—I could cry for vexation, your presence here is absolutely necessary.—Williams is such an ass that there is no depending on his constancy, such a passive soul or rather body, for he has not a spark of spirit about him, that his mother when she comes will with half a word be able to persuade him that he never thought you tolerable.----And that Harriott, against whom you had taken such pains to steel his heart, is an angel. For some hours after your departure, he did not know what to do with himself, and was ready like a great boy, to blubber for the loss of his plaything, but unfortunately for you, he has at last hit upon a new method of making a netting shuttle, this entirely engrosses his thoughts---and you poor Lady Bab, may now bind your brow with mournful willow.---He seeks only to be diverted, and honest man, every thing has the good fortune to produce in him this effect; a wife, a monkey, a netting shuttle, or a Lord Mayor's shew, 'tis all one to Ranger.----However, I'll do what I can for you, luckily Mrs. Williams is obliged to delay her visit, in that time I do not despair of effecting the scheme we concerted *ensemble*.—I have only to persuade him that he is desperately in love with you,---he will stare no doubt, and perhaps be at first a little incredulous, but I shall tell him,

that I see it in his eyes---that people are often affected with that disease, without being sensible of it, and that it frequently proves fatal where timely remedies are not applied. I will every day pretend to discover new symptoms of it, both in his face and person.---In short, let me alone to work him to our purpose,---if we can but divest him of the awe he has for the old lady, he will be vastly pleased with a jaunt to Scotland, it will, to use his own style, be rare fun. How my uncle will fret---that's a trifle,---but I am vexed to death to think, that while I am labouring to promote the interest of my friend, I am at the same time compelled to do an essential service to my foe.---Yes Bab, I must ever regard my cousin as such, her conduct is a constant reproach to mine---she loves my husband, I know she loves him to distraction.---Yet censure itself cannot find the slightest indiscretion in her behaviour,---she struggles with her passion, even to the endangering of her life, her health is visibly impaired,---she has more sensibility than me, yet can she walk steadily in the thorny path of virtue.---I cannot bear her superiority---how I should glory in her fall---she must---she shall be humbled---strong are the temptations that are flung in her way. Ossory (*whose heart and mine were never paired above, so very different are the form and temper of our minds*) has conceived for her her, what the sentimental soul calls a tender friendship.---When I as is often the case, drive him from by my coolness or c - price, he flies to her for consolation,---in the mean time I am left at liberty to enjoy the more delightful company of my dear La Fare. There's a man for ye---so lively, so elegant, so formed to please, such a compleat master of the art of love, ---'tis impossible to resist him.---I may say with
the

the old Countess Marmontel, I am virtuous hitherto---by good luck. Neither of us are troubled with very squeamish consciences,---we must however be cautious.---La Fare is under obligations to my husband, he has too much gallantry to scruple making free with his neighbour's wife, but he would not wish to appear openly ungrateful.---I wish also to wait till Ossory sets me the example ; if I can but draw him into the snare I have laid for him, I shall then think myself entitled to the privilege of a modern wife---the fear of my exposing the frailty of his dulcinea, will tie his tongue.---But I fear I shall never be able to wait, for the last act of their snail moving intrigue.---I long for the commencement of mine---heartily sick of wedlock's insipid joys, I feel no more emotion at Ossory's caresses than I should from embracing his grandfather's bust---La Fare ! the dear La Fare ! can alone awaken my passion, and charm my senses. I speak freely to you Bab, you can make allowance for the weakness of human nature---you was from the first the confident of my new passion---You have seen the dear man at my feet---You have heard his persuasive eloquence,---and you have owned, that instead of censuring our loves, you wished yourself in my place.---How I miss you,---the presence of a third person prevented all suspicion ; while you was here, I had a thousand opportunities of seeing him in private, but now, how seldom does a favourable opportunity offer---our enchanting country rambles are no more, a *tete a tete* might give room for censure, and a trio was alone supportable, with my kind Wilmot.---I am become quite peevish,---that unsufferable prude, Harriot, has such a vile pair of penetrating eyes. La Fare was this morning so indiscreet, as to put my hand
to

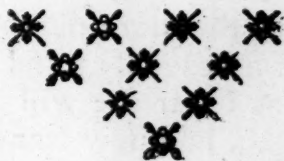
to his lips, while stooping at my knee to lift my handkerchief, he imagined the eyes above-mentioned, fixed on a piece of embroidery, the fittest place for them, but behold on glancing mine towards them full in my face did they dart, a look of mingled surprise, pity, and contempt---contempt---heavens!----It is not to be borne.--In revenge for this piece of impertinent watchfulness, I gave Williams the hint, Harriot, said I, thinks you neglect her---fye who could expect so fine a gentleman as you are, would give room for such a reproach.--From that moment till the evening, when Offory came home and released him from the task, did he pester the girl with his nonsense. When this husband of mine had paid his respects to the rest of the company, he pranced up to me, offered to salute me, and awkwardly tore my apron with his spur.---“ Oh for heaven sake,” cried I, pushing him from me, “ none of your odious “ pawing,” the hated familiarity which matrimony admits of, is a perfect antidote to love.---“ ’Tis I madam,” said he, “ not the familiarity “ that am odious.” He retired, and with a pensive air seated himself by my cousin.---“ Would “ you amiable Harriot, repulse with scornful ill- “ nature, a husband who adored you.”---“ Not “ if that husband expressed his fondness with as “ much delicacy as your lordship.”---“ I am “ much obliged to you for so flattering a compli- “ ment,” returned he bowing, but Lady Offory has, you find very different ideas of what you call delicacy; pawing is the expression she thinks fit to make use of: he spoke with an air of disdain equally contemptuous. I tripped to the harpsichord and began warbling, “ None but fools would “ marry now, &c.” for the rest of the evening he took not the slightest notice of me, he thought
honest

honest man to vex me, by being uncommonly assiduous to my cousin; it was the very thing I wished for, as she wholly engrossed his attention; La Fare found a thousand opportunities of expressing (at least by his eyes) the ardent passion which glows in his breast.-----What but his dear company, could induce me a moment longer to stay in the odious country, he

“ From a desert could banish solitude.”

Adieu!--my Letters are unsufferably long, and what is still worse horridly stupid--it is your own fault---I have never been myself since you left me, nevertheless I still remain very much your's,

ISABELLA RICHMOND.



L E T T E R X X .

Lord OSSORY to EDWARD MELVILL,
Esq.

YOU say that the encomiums I in my last bestowed on matrimony, have determined you to follow my example.—Stop, my good friend—I unintentionally deceived you, because, alas ! I was myself deceived-----too late my eyes are opened, and I awake from the pleasing dream. I do not dissuade you from entering into a state, which I still believe is capable of the highest happiness, though I, from an imprudent choice, have failed of obtaining it. But I advise you to beware ; let my fate be a warning to you ; trust not alone a lovely face, a gentle air ;---endeavour, if possible, to penetrate the thick vale of hypocrisy, with which the female heart is enveloped,----most female hearts, I should say, for I have found, alas, too late, one lovely, amiable exception ; but dazzled with the gaudy blaze of mere external charms overlooked, I was blind to the more durable, the more enchanting graces of a heavenly mind.-----My wife---my torment as I fear she will prove, as thrown aside the masque, and now stands confessed the coquette, the modern fine lady. While her cousin every day discovers new attractions---- Fool that I was, to be caught by outward show !---What advantage do we derive from our boasted reason, when our senses so easily mislead us ? Happiness and misery were set before me.---Rash, intuated fool that I was, I chose the latter.----In marriage I have found my kindred soul---with her I should have been supremely blest'd---she is really
mistress

mistress of those elegant sentiments, which the other only affected :---And oh Edward, to add to my remorse, she loves ; yes, in spite of all her modest, delicate caution.---I have discovered the dear, flattering, dangerous secret, which she would rather die than voluntarily reveal, and which, with such virtuous resolution, she struggles to conquer.-----

“ On her cheek, the residence of spring,
“ Pale omen sits.

Her health declines :---what an affecting object !---and then to know myself the cause, can you wonder if I feel more for her than friendship alone could inspire?----My wife's caprice, her mortifying indifference is insupportable. Short is the reign of mere external beauty, yet she might ever have held me in her chains, had she but have taken the least pains to please.-----If she had felt for me a mutual passion---she made me believe she did---artful creature!----a heart like hers is incapable of love.---I fear she as strongly resembles her mother in her mind as in her person:---That wanton libertine, who is a disgrace to her sex.---I shall not at present tell you my reasons for this apprehension---suffice it to say that my domestic happiness is at an end.---In what gaudy visions did I indulge my imagination ! how many plans of future felicity had I formed with the woman, (the angel as she then appeared) whom I adored, and a friend who I believed so worthy of my esteem ! How repeatedly did she talk of a country life, of calm content, and rational joys !-----Infatuated wretch that I was, how could I be so easily deceived ? She now laughs at my folly, in supposing that

that she would ever submit to be buried in obscurity ;---a person who is formed to attract universal admiration---she sickens at the sight of country 'squires, expires at the rustic conversation of their dowdy help-mates ; a murmuring stream throws her into the vapours ; the birds deafen her with their unmeaning notes ; she cannot support the fatigue of walking over my parks and gardens ; yawns when I talk to her of my intended improvements.---Can just make shift to kill the tedious day, by playing at piquet with La Fare---enters into none of my amusements.---hates reading---never touches her harpsichord in my presence, because she knows I am passionately fond of music.---But I can pardon her this, since the sweet Harriot, with far more taste, supplies her place. This amiable girl, who sees how much I suffer from her cousin's unkind, unmerited perverseness, omits no endeavours to divert my melancholy ; she plays at half a word, sings to me,---and O how ravishing are her plaintive notes !---She rides out with me, her physicians having ordered her to take this exercise, visits with me the groves, the pleasing shades, which I had formed for the reception of her rival ; points out a thousand beauties in nature, which would otherwise have escaped my notice.---She is particularly fond of flowers.---I take care that her dressing-room is every day supplied with the finest that mine, or the neighbouring gardens can produce---in reward for my pains, she constantly wears a nosegay selected from these rural presents.

“ — Ye painted populace,
 “ Who dwell in fields, and lead ambrosial lives,
 “ You gladlier grow, ambitious of her hand,
 “ Which often crops your odours, incense meet
 “ To thoughts so pure”——

Trem-

The PRECIPITATE CHOICE.

85

Trembling I indulge myself in her delightful society---I wish to act with honour and integrity, but I fear the temptation would be too strong for me did I not value her peace, her reputation, her happiness more than life. The same object which endangers my virtue is also the preserver of it; my fervent regard for her is my security. Adieu, my dear Melvill. I shall make no apology for the length of this epistle, depending on the friendship with which you honour

Your humble servant,

O S S O R Y.



H

LET-

L E T T E R XXI.

Lady OSSORY to Lady BAB WILLIAMS.

JOY, joy, to the bride!--Well child, how are you after your flying expedition, how is your spouse?---Poor man---not yet jealous I hope; but patience, you have not yet had time to give him cause, O what joyous lives will you and I lead this winter, Masquerades, Almack's, and the dear Coterie---not to mention our still more delightful *petite soupes* our little private *quarrees* with my La Fare and your Romeo,---who would wish not to be a wife in these our modish days; my affairs here are in the best train imaginable---my husband and Harriot bill from morning to night, I give them every opportunity they could wish---prudes I trow are flesh and blood as well as their neighbours---my scheme must be successful; then let me but catch her tripping, and all the joys of unbounded liberty are mine, besides the dear malignant triumph, I shall experience at her fall.-----Ossory's mouth will be stopped, if he dares to murmur, the world shall know the provocation I have received, and his idol, his Harriot's reputation, as well as my own shall be sacrificed to my revenge, the world will justify me.--What, to be forsaken for one, whose charms are so inferior, who will wonder, that urged by wounded vanity I should make reprisals.-----My uncle storms at the trick you have played him, while his daughter looks upon you as the guardian angel who has saved her from ruin. Your double chinned ambling mother-in-law,

in-law, was at first piqued at the disobedience of her boy, but there is something so soothing in the name of my daughter Lady Bab, to the pride of your half bred gentry, that it soon conquered her resentment, a constant simper plays on her full blown features, while she receives compliments of congratulation on her son's marriage.----You would die with laughing, did you see the ridiculous airs she gives herself, so much stronger is her vanity than her avarice, had we been better acquainted with her, it would have saved us some trouble, but no matter, you are married, that is sufficient. Rivers is now again looking out for a mate for his daughter, several neighbouring male creatures have offered themselves, but tho' he is in a violent hurry to dispose of his troublesome charge yet has he so much family pride about him, 'tis not every one will go down--mean time Harriot is as gay as a bird escaped from it's cage, the tender assiduity of my honest man does not a little contribute to raise her late dejected spirits, I suspect they have come to an explanation, what the next step will be one may easily guess.---Do you not marvel to see me so passive in this affair, not a tincture of jealousy in my whole composition, but pride one would think---Lard child!---what signifies losing the affections of a husband, when one is sure of being adored, followed, admired, courted by all the rest of his sex, this will be the case when I get to dear London, or at least you and I will share between us all that we deem worthy of our smiles,----at present give me La Fare, and take all the rest.---

“ The world goes round.”

Adieu,

Adieu, he waits for me in the grove, Ossory and
his dulcinea are rode out---I fly to enjoy the rap-
tures of a *tete a tete*.

Your's,

I. OSSORY.

